

HOW DID A FRENCH MAJORITY AFFECT CANADA EAST?

Have you ever wondered why French is the official language of the province of Québec? In the 1800s, a majority of the population of Canada East was made up of French speakers, called *Canadiens*. The *Canadiens* were descendants of the early French settlers of New France. Most were Catholic and belonged to the working class.

English businessmen dominated the economies of Montréal and Québec City. The mid-1800s were a time of prosperity for many businesspeople, but the working class earned low wages and did not share in this prosperity.

Examine the illustration in **Figure 1.10**. It shows the start of construction of a new Catholic cathedral in Montréal in 1870. The bishop of Montréal chose to build the cathedral in the heart of the English-speaking and Protestant area of the city. Why do you think the bishop chose to build the cathedral in this location?

SEIGNEURS AND LAND OWNERSHIP

Wealthy landowners who rented out smaller plots of land to *Canadien* farmers were known as **seigneurs**. The Papineaus were seigneurs that owned a huge amount of land: 178 000 acres on the Ottawa River.

The town of Papineauville was named after them, as well as a whole region of Québec called Papineau. Louis-Joseph Papineau was an important politician in the 1800s and was a key figure in the Lower Canada rebellions in 1837.

seigneur a landowner who owned large areas of land and lent small parcels to farmers for their use



FIGURE 1.10 This 1870 illustration entitled *Mary Queen of the World Cathedral: Benediction of the First Stone* shows the ceremony for Montréal's new Catholic cathedral. The bishop of Montréal began planning the cathedral in 1857. **Analyze:** Based on this illustration, how was the ceremony received by the community?

The Papineaus sold and rented land to thousands of other *Canadiens*. Sawmills were their main business, but they also profited from owning large commercial farms. Many *Canadien* farmers rented land from the Papineaus or bought it on credit, but could not make their regular payments. As a result, they had to give up their plots of land, or sell them back to the Papineaus for a small part of what they had paid. The story of the Papineaus provides an example of society in Canada East in the mid-1800s: the story of the few wealthy *Canadiens* like the Papineaus, and the experience of the many working-class *Canadiens*.

ABANDONING FARM LIFE

When the parents in a farming family died, the land they farmed was divided among their children. The plots of land became smaller and smaller over the years. After several generations, these small farms could hardly produce enough to support the farming families.

When farming could not support their families, *Canadiens* turned to other ways to make money. Often the men in the families sought jobs in the lumber industry. As thousands of desperate men competed for the lumbering jobs, business owners found that they could hire them for very low wages. Soon the *Canadiens* had to borrow money to feed their families. Many could not pay back these debts. Read the excerpt from a letter from Louis-Joseph Papineau in **Figure 1.11** describing the situation of his tenant farmers who had borrowed money. What does this excerpt reveal about the situation of many farmers in Canada East in the mid-1800s?

CANADIEN MIGRATION

Since many *Canadiens* could not earn enough money to pay their debts, hundreds of thousands were forced to give up their farms and move to the cities to find work. In 1800, only 5 percent of the population of Canada East lived in cities. By 1867, 20 percent of the population lived in cities. Also, many left Canada East to find work in the United States.

Read the translated (from French) excerpt in **Figure 1.12** from Patrice Lacombe's novel *The Ancestral Farm*. In this work of fiction, he gives an accurate description of the *Canadien* migration to the cities. How would the trend described in this excerpt affect the number of jobs available in the cities?

"After seeing himself completely ruined ... Chauvin finally decided to come and seek shelter in the city. In doing so, he followed the example of other farmers, driven from their lands by poor harvests and drawn to the city in the hope of earning a living ... They arrived in droves, almost doubling the population of our suburbs."

— Patrice Lacombe, author

"We will threaten court action and we will sue a few people, but in such a new area there is really so much poverty that I feel more repugnance [intense disgust] in suing them than they do in repaying. Lack of foresight [ability to predict], ignorance, the tendency to become indebted to the merchants are the common failings of all the habitants without exception."

— Louis-Joseph Papineau, politician and seigneur

FIGURE 1.11 This is an excerpt from a letter that Papineau wrote to his son Amédée in 1852. **Analyze:** What does this letter tell us about Papineau's attitude toward the *Canadiens* who farmed on his land?

FIGURE 1.12 Lacombe's 1846 novel *The Ancestral Farm* tells the story of Chauvin, a farmer who loses his land after falling into debt. **Analyze:** According to this excerpt, what challenges did Chauvin face?

FORMULATE QUESTIONS

Every inquiry begins with a question or questions. Formulating effective questions enables you to develop a deeper understanding of your topic by helping you stay focused and find information that you want to know. What makes good inquiry questions?

Good inquiry questions

- are important and meaningful to us
- are open-ended—they do not have just one answer
- are debatable—people may not agree on the answer
- can be answered by gathering evidence and facts

To formulate effective inquiry questions, start by thinking about your topic and summarizing what you already know about it. Then consider what you want to know and brainstorm a variety of questions using a table similar to the one in **Figure 1.13**.

Who/Which?	Who controlled the economy of Canada East during the mid-1800s?
What?	What was life like for Canadien farmers who were unable to pay their debts?
Where?	Where did some Canadien farmers move in search of land and work?
When?	When did families start leaving their farms?
Why?	Why did Canadien farmers not turn to the government for aid?
How?	How did the migration of Canadiens affect the communities they left behind and the communities they moved into?
Other	Did the Catholic Church help struggling farmers and their families?


FIGURE 1.13 The questions in this table explore the challenges that Canadien farmers faced during the mid-1800s. **Analyze:** Which of these questions meet the criteria for effective inquiry questions?

CASE STUDY: QUÉBEC WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

Women have always contributed to the economy, even though in the past most did not leave their households or receive payment for the work they did. For example, women on farms grew food for the family, helped with the harvesting of crops, milked the cows, cooked, and made clothing. They produced many of the household goods.

In the 1800s, industrialization and the loss of farms forced many Canadiens to look for work in factories. Many women found work in the clothing industry sewing garments. In 1871, about 20 percent of Montréal’s entire manufacturing workforce was employed in this industry. About 80 percent of workers in the clothing industry were women and children.

Figure 1.14 contains part of a discussion between a Montréal clothing manufacturer, Mr. Muir, and a government committee about his workers, who were mostly Canadien women. What does this exchange tell you about the women looking for work?



“‘You have a surplus [excess] population in Montréal which enables you to get cheap labour?’ he [Muir] was asked. ‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘in fact it makes my heart ache to have the women come crying for work.’”

— Mr. Muir, Montréal clothing manufacturer

FIGURE 1.14 These words from a hearing in 1874 appear in Bettina Bradbury’s 1997 book *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal*. **Analyze:** What can you learn about the attitude of the factory owner from this exchange?



FIGURE 1.15 This photo shows women sorting ore, or rock containing minerals, at the Huntington Copper Mining Company in Bolton, Québec, in 1867. The ore would then be processed to extract copper. **Analyze:** How might a photo of today’s Canadian mine or factory workers be different from this one?

Factory owners took advantage of the large number of people looking for work by lowering wages, which meant that often several members of a family had to take up factory work to earn enough for the family to survive. Factory owners were particularly eager to hire women and children because they were usually paid much less than men for doing the same work. By the 1860s, women and children made up over 30 percent of those working in factories in Montréal.

Women did not work only in factories. They also found work in laundries, private homes (as servants), and mines. **Figure 1.15** shows women sorting raw materials at a mine in Bolton, Québec. Here too, they were paid less than men for doing the same work.

Women also worked in professions such as teaching. Examine **Figure 1.16**. Why do you think teaching attracted so many women?

Percentage of Male and Female Teachers in Québec, 1853-1859		
Year	Percentage of Male Teachers	Percentage of Female Teachers
1853	37	63
1855	33	67
1857	33	67
1859	31	69

FIGURE 1.16 This table shows the distribution of male and female teachers in Québec in the 1850s. **Analyze:** What does this table tell you about the gender of teachers in the 1850s?

TRY IT

1. What questions do you have on the topic of Québec women in the workforce in the second half of the 1800s? Develop an inquiry question for each row in **Figure 1.13**. Which of your inquiry questions is the most effective?
2. Choose a social issue from the 1800s that interests you. Develop at least three inquiry questions using the criteria of an effective inquiry question.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FRENCH NATIONALISM

When the *Act of Union* joined Upper Canada and Lower Canada into one colony called the Province of Canada in 1840, the new colony’s government was dominated by English politicians. They wanted to **assimilate** the French people, despite the fact that the majority of the population of Canada East was French. This means that the British wanted the French to adapt to their own English customs, and they wanted to remove the French language from the colony altogether.

Many Canadiens fought back against this attempt to assimilate them into English culture. French **nationalism** was an effort by Canadien leaders to create a national identity and protect French language, religion, and culture. Nationalism is a belief that people with a common language, land, history, and culture should be an independent nation.

Some governors such as Lord Metcalfe (1843–1845) and Lord Elgin (1847–1854) favoured abandoning assimilation. Instead, they supported the Canadiens keeping their culture. Read the quote from Lord Metcalfe in **Figure 1.17**. Why does Metcalfe think assimilation should be abandoned?

Several different groups of Canadien leaders promoted Canadien nationalism. For example, the Papineaus wanted to keep the French seigneurial system. When it was abolished in 1854, they criticized the British governor. They claimed that this was a way for the English to destroy their French heritage.

THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN PROMOTING CANADIEN IDENTITY

Catholic bishops and priests travelled to cities and rural communities throughout British North America. They spoke publicly about the importance of the French language. They gained political influence and encouraged Canadiens to be leaders of Catholicism in the Americas. Read **Figure 1.18**, a passage from an article by Louis-François Laflèche, the bishop of Trois-Rivières. Why do you think Bishop Laflèche would promote Canadien nationalism?

“The real meaning of the word *patriotism*: It is the love of our country, of the ground where our ancestors’ ashes lie. It is the unbreakable attachment to the language of our mother, to the faith of our fathers. It is respect for our institutions and our laws. Whoever has these sentiments deeply engraved on his or her heart is a true patriot.”
— *Louis-François Laflèche, bishop of Trois-Rivières*

FIGURE 1.18 This excerpt is from an 1865 newspaper article by Bishop Laflèche entitled “Homeland and Patriotism.” **Analyze:** According to Laflèche, what role does religion have in the Canadien identity?

assimilate to bring into conformity or adapt to the customs and attitudes of a group

nationalism a desire for people sharing a common culture, language, and history to form an independent nation

“If the [Canadiens] are to be ruled to their satisfaction ... every attempt to metamorphose [change] them systematically into English must be abandoned.”
— *Lord Metcalfe, governor general of the Province of Canada*

FIGURE 1.17 This quote is from Lord Metcalfe, speaking to a member of the British government in 1843. **Analyze:** Why would Metcalfe want Canadiens to be ruled “to their satisfaction”?

How does Québec’s official language today show the importance of Canadien nationalism?



FIGURE 1.19 This modern-day photo shows part of the original campus of Laval University in Québec City, the first French-language university in British North America. **Analyze:** What evidence can you see of the origins of the university?

Church leaders were also taking advantage of the new industries. They invested the Church’s wealth in railways, mining, and lumber. **Figure 1.19** shows the original campus of Laval University, which the Church founded in 1852 with this new income. How would projects like this increase the Church’s role in Canadien society?

THE RISE OF CANADIEN ARTISTS

In the mid-1800s, there was a growing French-speaking middle class in Canada East. This small class embraced Canadien literature and arts. Writers such as François-Xavier Garneau and Philippe-Joseph Aubert de Gaspé made Canadien history and stories popular. They created stories about Canadien heroes such as Joseph Montferrand. Montferrand was a lumberjack famed for physically defending fellow Canadiens against British bullies. Look at the Canadian stamp in **Figure 1.20** that shows Montferrand. Why would he be a popular subject to this day for writers and artists creating a Canadien identity?

These stories about Canadien heroes influenced other Canadien artists who wrote novels, plays, and poems about them. They reminded the Canadiens that they had a history and culture long before the British conquered New France. How do you think such artists influenced Canadiens during a time when Canada East was still a British colony?

FIGURE 1.20 This 1992 stamp portrays legendary Canadien lumberjack and strongman Joseph Montferrand (1802–1864). **Analyze:** Why would the government of Canada put Montferrand on a stamp and depict him in this pose?



CHECK-IN

1. **CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE**

What impact did the rapid rise in the Canadien population have on their living conditions?
2. **CONTINUITY AND CHANGE**

How did Canadien society change with the rise of French nationalism? In what ways did it remain the same?
3. **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

What would lead the Canadiens to believe they were a distinct nation from the rest of Canada?
4. **INTERPRET AND ANALYZE**

How did the Catholic Church contribute to the development of Canadien nationalism?