

## **Two Accounts of the Fall of New France**

**Concept(s)** Historical Significance

**Prepared for Grade(s)** 9

**Province** BC

**By** Tom Morton

**Time Period(s)** 1700-1800

**Time allotment** one to two periods

### **Brief Description of the Task**

Students are given two different stories about the fall of New France and asked to consider in what ways they are different and why. The goal of this lesson is for students to learn how to deal with competing accounts or narratives and to recognize that accounts are constructed based on decisions about significance and interpretation of evidence.

### **Objectives**

Historical Thinking Objectives:

Students are encouraged to see that differences in accounts depend on the questions asked and criteria used to determine significance.

Students will be able to explain how and why judgements about historical nature vary.

### **Detailed Instructions**

1. There are several ways to engage students in a study of competing narratives. Students could be asked at the end of a period to write a page on the history of the period or of the past week in social studies. The teacher takes in the writing, chooses a few wildly different ones to share and next period discusses them with the class. Alternatively, students could be given two different versions of the same event or time, such as the children's book, *The Real Story of the Three Little Pigs*. When I feel adventuresome, I secretly ask a student to role play an argument with me in front of the class at the end of which I walk out of the classroom. I then ask the whole class to write individual descriptions of what happened, take them in and share conflicting accounts.

Build on the class discussions and make a link to different stories about the past: Why do they differ? Why is there not one story? What would you do if you had two stories that did not agree?

Analogies to a judge at a trial or a teacher dealing with a conflict between students may also help students to see the importance in history to develop competence in this.

2. The lesson is based on the assumption that it is part of direct instruction on how to understand competing narratives. However, the task could also be a diagnostic

tool for the teacher or a kind of pre-test for students followed by another pair of accounts later in the year.

3. Review the geography of Eastern North America and the concept of historical significance.
4. Remind students about the purpose of the exercise: to learn to handle different stories, to consider why historians might decide that one part of a story is more significant than another. Ask them to note in the margin next to each paragraph the topic or to underline topic sentences so that you might return at the end to compare the two accounts.
5. Distribute the readings. Read with them or have them read independently and make notes or underline.
6. Distribute handout two, "When did New France Fall." and ask them to complete the questions on the reason for the two different dates of the fall.
7. Discuss their answers trying to move them towards the understanding that neither answer is necessarily better; they differ because they are based on different criteria.
8. Ask students to consider how else the two stories differ. Have them use their notes to decide what is significant for the authors of these two accounts and plausible explanations why. Build on the more sophisticated answers to the previous question on the dates to guide them towards recognizing the different criteria implicit in the text's selection of topics and interpretation of the war.

The texts were written to be different but to be fair-minded. They were written by the same person, which should complicate any student who attributes the differences to bias.