

TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR SHANTYMEN OF CACHE LAKE

Shantymen of Cache Lake introduces students to an important part of Canadian social history in the 1870s by describing the timber trade, social and working conditions in remote camps, the rigors of travel and life in the wilderness and working conditions in the period.

Ideas for stimulating classroom discussion and student projects based on the novel:

THE NOVEL

- What is the setting of *Shantymen of Cache Lake*?
- The novel is set in 1873, and John Bains is 14 years old and his sister Meg is 13. They go to work in a logging camp and do not attend school. Is that realistic?
- John is portrayed as indecisive. Does he change in the novel? What is the reason for his change?
- Meg is feisty and outspoken. Does this differ from the way females were treated in the 19th century? What about today?

CANADIAN HISTORY

- Why did the timber trade grow to be so important to Canada in the 19th century?
- What was the major market for the logs cut in the Ottawa Valley?
- What were the attitudes towards children working in Canada during the time of the novel?
- The shantymen in the novel are of French, Scots, Irish and English origin. Why was there such a mix of ethnic groups working in the camps?

GEOGRAPHY

- Where is the Upper Ottawa River Valley?
- Draw a map of the vast forest belt of northern Canada.
- What is the difference between a coniferous forest and a deciduous forest?
- Collect photographs showing examples of Canada's coniferous forest.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- Draw a map showing John and Meg's trip by sleigh to the camp on Cache Lake.
- Write a brief history of the 19th century timber trade in the Upper Ottawa River Valley.
- Draw a camboose shanty showing the location of the cooking fire and the bunks where the shantymen slept.
- Describe the dangers of the log drive.