

TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR FIRST SPRING ON THE GRAND BANKS

Through the novel *First Spring on the Grand Banks*, students will be introduced to outport life in Newfoundland in the 1870s. John and Meg sail aboard their friend Canso's schooner to the Grand Banks fishing grounds and in the spring they use a cod trap to catch fish in the caplin run. Life in Newfoundland, with the polarization between the merchants and the impoverished fishermen, is explored in depth.

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

THE NOVEL

- Canso and his friends take his father's fishing schooner without permission turning them all into outlaws. Do you think this was fair?
- The novel describes the "truck system" where fishermen became indebted to fish merchants and were forced to sell their catch to the merchant below value. Why did fishermen get caught in relationships like this?
- What were the dangers of Banks fishing as described in the novel?
- Describe the rhythm of life in a Newfoundland outport in the late nineteenth century.

CANADIAN HISTORY

- Research the fishing industry of early Canada and Newfoundland. Why was fishing so important?
- Why did Newfoundlanders dry their fish?
- Trace the European settlement pattern in Newfoundland and explain why the settlers came from different parts of Britain and Europe.
- Newfoundland only became part of the Canadian nation in 1949. What were the benefits Newfoundlanders received when they joined confederation? What did they lose by joining Canada?

GEOGRAPHY

- What ocean currents mingle on the Grand Banks? Are the currents the only reason the Banks have a rich fishery?
- Today the Province of Newfoundland is called Newfoundland and Labrador. Where is Labrador and why is it now a part of Newfoundland?
- Sometimes Newfoundlanders call their province "the Rock." Why do they use that term?
- What famous ocean liner sank on the Grand Banks in 1912 after striking an iceberg?

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- Draw a picture of the schooner *Newfoundlander*.
- Describe what you think it would be like caught in a gale aboard a schooner on the Grand Banks.
- Draw a map of the Grand Banks showing the ocean currents and the major shipping lanes.
- Imagine that you are John or Meg and had to prepare for the caplin run in the inshore season. Describe how you would prepare for the hardships and dangers.