

The Acadian Diaspora

Lesson Plan

A resource developed through the *Longfellow and the Forging of American Identity* program

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Suggested Grade Level: 6-12

Subject Area: Women's Studies, Franco-American Studies, Maine Studies, and University Studies

Learning Results:

Social Studies

History

Historical Inquiry, Analysis and Interpretation: C2

English Language Arts

Process of Reading: A3, A9

Literature and Culture: B3, B11

Language and Images: C2, C3

Processes of Writing and Speaking: E4

Time Required:

2-3 weeks

Learning Objectives:

Reading *Evangeline* as a feminist and metaphoric text.

Introduction:

Evangeline, Longfellow's heroine, has long been read as a search for Evangeline's long-lost love, Gabrielle--separated by the British in 1755 at the time of the Grand Derangement, the Acadian Diaspora. The couple comes to find each other late in life and the story ends. Or does it?

Why does Longfellow choose to tell the story of this cultural group with a woman as the protagonist who is a member of a minority culture—the Acadians? Does this say something about Longfellow's ability for understanding the misfortunes of others?

Who is Evangeline searching for? Is it Gabrielle, or her long-lost land of Acadia? Does the couple represent that which is lost to them, the land of their birth and rebirth? These are some of the thoughts and ideas that permeate Longfellow's text, *Evangeline*, beyond the tale of two lovers lost to one another. As the documentary, "Evangeline's Quest" states: "The Acadians, the only people to celebrate their defeat." They, as a cultural group, are found in the poem and their story is told.

Materials and Resources Required:

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie*
- Internet access for additional resources (optional)

Preparation Required/Preliminary Discussion:

Students should have a basic understanding of the Acadian Diaspora of 1755. For background information, see:

Musée Acadien, Evangeline's Odyssey

Read "Background to Longfellow's Poem" and "Guided Tour to the Odyssey", Sections 1 through 6
http://www.umoncton.ca/maum/evangeline_expo.html
(a copy of the poem is available at this web site)

Suggested Readings:

Bio of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

<http://www.auburn.edu/~vestmon/longfellow.html>

History Timeline of the Acadians

<http://www.acadian-cajun.com/acadtime.htm>

Taken from: The Evangeline 150th Anniversary Project,

<http://www.umfk.maine.edu/archives/evangeline/>

"Evangeline: an Overview"

Article by Bernard Quetchenbach, who was a Professor of English, University of Maine at Fort Kent

<http://www.umfk.maine.edu/archives/evangeline/benny.htm>

An initiative of the Acadian Archives / Archives acadiennes at the University of Maine at Fort Kent

<http://www.umfk.maine.edu/archives/>

Discussion prompts:

- Did you like the book? What did you like about it? What didn't you like about it?
- Did you find the book difficult to read? Or, was it accessible to you as a reader?
- What makes the story believable or not?
- Do you recognize the biblical comparisons in the story? Name some.
- Are the characters portrayed as authentic?
- What are the cultures portrayed in the book? What do you notice as different between the cultures?
- What are some of the points of contention? Of peacemaking?
- What is the role of the parent and child?
- Can you identify the cultural manner of being/living: morals, mores, ritual, customs, beliefs, etc?
- What aspect of the cultural "psychology" of the women do you recognize?
- What aspect of the cultural "psychology" of the men do you recognize?
- What is the cultural "psychology" of the group?

- Are any of these "standards" of behavior familiar to you? Are they true still today?
- Do you find examples of the collectivity, the good of the group as important? How about individuality, are there examples of that as well? Which would you say is more important?

Writing:

After the discussion, have students write a reaction paper or journal entry. These can then be shared and discussed with the rest of the class.