

Name _____



Jacques Cartier

By Mary Lynn Bushong

During the great race to explore the New World, France was off to a slow start. The first to explore for them was an Italian named Verrazano. In 1534, a young Frenchman name Cartier took the standard for his countrymen and led the way across the ocean to the New World.

Born in 1491, in the seacoast town of St. Malo, Jacques was sent to Dieppe to receive his education as a navigator. When King Francis I wanted to send an expedition to North America to look for a short route to Asia, he chose Cartier. Some people believe that he even accompanied Verrazano on his expedition.

In 1534, Cartier left France to discover what he could of the New World. His two ships arrived after only 20 days of sailing. They immediately began exploring the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Anticosti Island, and the Gaspé Peninsula.

While in the Gaspé region, the ships were approached by approximately 50 canoes filled with Micmac Indians. They appeared to be friendly, and the two groups met again the next day to trade and celebrate their new friendship.

Cartier resumed exploring the bay and soon met up with 200 Huron Indians. They were accompanied by their Chief, Donnaconna, and his two sons. When it was time to go back to France, Cartier took the two sons with him.

King Francis I was impressed enough with Cartier's discoveries that he commissioned an even bigger expedition the next year. Cartier returned in the spring of 1535, with the two Huron men and three ships. It was under their direction that he found that the Gulf of St. Lawrence was not a bay, but the mouth of a very large river. Cartier hoped that it was the water route to Asia he had been searching for.



Throughout the course of the summer and into the fall, they explored the river as far as Montreal, where they were stopped by rapids.

The extreme cold of the Canadian winter took the Frenchmen by surprise. They expected the winter climate to be warmer since it was on a more southerly latitude than Paris was. The Europeans were not properly prepared for the winter.

Cartier was also a poor leader. His inability to control his men led to anger among the Iroquois in the nearby village. In spite of that, some of the Indians helped the white men when they became terribly ill from scurvy. By drinking a tea made from the white cedar tree, they were cured.

After returning to France once more, Cartier wanted to make another expedition to the New World. A war with Spain delayed the trip, and he was unable to leave until 1541. To make things worse, the king appointed a co-leader to keep order among the men.

Cartier left first to find a good site for a fort and possibly a settlement. He built a fort near the Saguenay River, where he found large deposits of what he thought were gold and diamonds.

Over the course of the winter, the Hurons killed many of his men. They were no longer friendly when they discovered that the French planned to stay. When spring came, Cartier was tired of waiting for his partner, de Roberval. He loaded up his ships and decided to go home. On the way, he stopped and met de Roberval in Newfoundland. He was ordered by de Roberval to go back to the fort where he over-wintered. Instead, Cartier slipped away in the night with his ships and returned to France. De Roberval stayed one winter in North America and returned home as well.

Cartier was bitterly disappointed to learn that his collection of gold and diamonds was nothing more than quartz and fool's gold. He never returned to Canada, but retired to his hometown of St. Malo. He died there in 1577 at the age of 86.

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Questions

1. Why was finding a short route to Asia so important?

_____ 2. The French expected the winter to be mild, because:

- A. They saw palm trees.
- B. The Indians told them so.
- C. It was located at a more southerly latitude.
- D. None of the above

3. Why did Cartier take the two Huron men with him back to France?

_____ 4. Why did the king send de Roberval with Cartier on his third trip?

- A. De Roberval asked to go.
- B. Cartier was a poor leader.
- C. De Roberval paid his own way.
- D. The king did not want trouble because of Cartier's leadership.

5. Why did Cartier's men cause trouble with the Iroquois?

_____ 6. Cartier's men drank a tea from this tree to cure their scurvy.

- A. White cedar
- B. Red oak
- C. Red cedar
- D. White pine

7. Why did Cartier leave de Roberval at Newfoundland and go home?

_____ 8. Why did the Hurons start killing the Frenchmen during Cartier's last expedition?

- A. The French had come to stay.
- B. The French were taking their land.
- C. They were tired of them.
- D. The French took their food.

If you had been Cartier, why would you have wanted to go to the New World?
