

Marguerite sets out on her mission to Canada.

*Did you know?*

Crossing the Atlantic Ocean, between France and Montreal... takes about 7 hours by plane, but could take up to 3 months by sea in 1650.

1659 - La Rochelle, France  
Marguerite Bourgeoys and her  
companions board the ship to New  
France.

Illustration: Francis Back



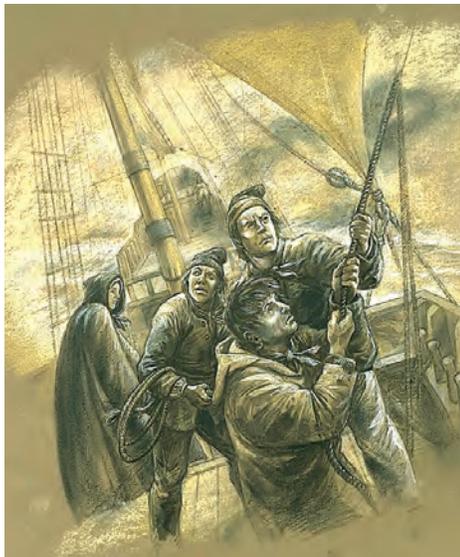
1659 - Marguerite and her  
companions tirelessly care for the  
sick and comfort the dying.

Illustration: Francis Back

A- A young, unmarried, lay woman travelling alone among a group of men!?

*What comes to mind when you read the 17th century French proverb below?*

*“When you go to war, pray once,  
When you go to sea, pray twice.”*



1653 - Crossing the Atlantic Ocean is extremely dangerous.

Illustration: Francis Back

The proverb certainly reflects the idea that the sea is supremely powerful and can be a terrifying and awe-inspiring place, doesn't it? The crossing of the Atlantic on a sailing vessel is long, difficult and perilous and many people perish at sea. While few men dare make the trip, Marguerite Bourgeoys travels back and forth between Canada and France seven times! In addition to her voyage to Ville-Marie, she returns to France three times to recruit companions or to handle business of the congregation.

The dangers at sea are, of course, violent storms, pirate attacks or naval battles against enemy powers. But over and above that, sailors and passengers have to cope extremely hard living conditions aboard ship!

➤ ***From the statements below, choose those you associate with living conditions on a ship at sea during the 17th century (the others refer more to travelling on a cruise ship in the 21st century!):***

Onboard doctors and nurses are on hand at all times and medication is available at the infirmary.  
  
In cases of serious illness or accidents, it is possible to contact emergency services by radio transmission.

Living in close quarters does not permit privacy or tranquility.

Private rooms are comfortable and quite spacious.

Drinkable water must be rationed so that it does not run out during the voyage.

Meals prepared by chefs are copious, healthy and delicious.

Because there are no toilets, chamber pots are used and the contents thrown overboard.

In addition to scurvy, the crew could be stricken by the plague or other often mortal diseases.

To relax, passengers are welcome to enjoy spa facilities, such as massages.

There is non-stop entertainment, such as, the casino, shows, discotheques, swimming pools, arcades, gyms, shops and much more.

If weak winds cause the voyage to be longer than expected, food can fall short. Already unsavoury, it could actually go stale or dry out.

Hygiene is practically non-existent. Filth and odours are part of everyday life onboard.

The ship is luxurious, safe and enjoyable. A place for a great vacation!

To avoid epidemics, the dead cannot remain onboard while waiting to arrive to destination for burial. Their bodies must be thrown overboard.

## B- Pioneers in New France: super heroes!

When Marguerite Bourgeoys arrives in Canada, in 1653, the land is still uncultivated and barely colonized. The population of all of New France is only about 700 souls. Quebec City and Trois-Rivières are a little more established, but in Ville-Marie, there is much to do and life is extremely difficult!



1653 - The first time Marguerite Bourgeoys arrives in Ville-Marie, there are not enough children to warrant opening a school. She goes from house to house to teach women to read and write.

Illustration: Francis Back

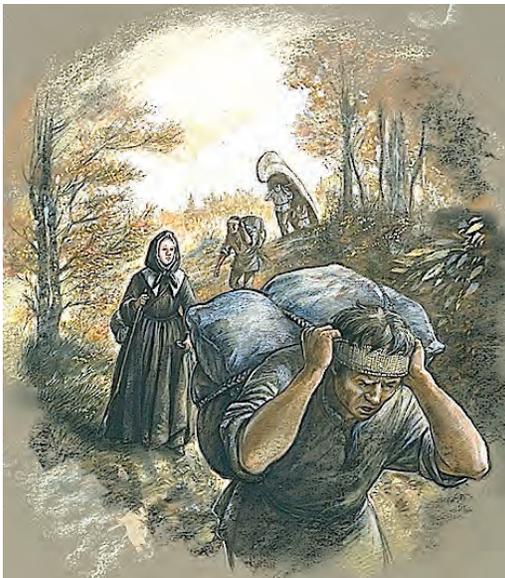
The forest is still untamed and filled with obstacles and dangers. Trees must be cut down with axes, stumps and boulders need to be removed, the land cultivated, animals bred and raised, houses built and the colony has to be populated and organized. Fresh supplies from France can arrive only during the four or five warm months of the year, consequently the settlers have to become self-reliant very quickly. They have to make everything themselves: their furniture, their clothing. They have to pick fruits, roots and berries in the woods and learn how to hunt and fish. Allied Amerindians help the settlers, especially in the fur trade, but they must always be wary of Iroquois attacks! At first, the threat is so great and ever-present that Marguerite has to live within the fortress.

Marguerite is not afraid to travel in  
the worst storms to go  
where she is needed.

Illustration: Sister Victoire Roy, CND



During the first few decades of colonization, the life of the settlers in New France is filled with hardships and perils. But these immigrants still wish for themselves and their families a better life than the one they left behind in France, where they had little chance, if any, of becoming land owners. It is from the 18th century on, once the land has been opened up and cultivated, that life in the colony finally improves.



1653 - When waterways can no longer  
be travelled, supplies and canoes  
have to be carried overland. This  
activity is called portage

Illustration: Francis Back

➤ *From the statements below, choose those you associate with life in Ville-Marie and in New France in the 17th century:*

The homes are comfortable, well insulated and heated.

The territory is made up of impenetrable forests. There are very few roads; the rivers and streams are the main ways to travel.

Travelling is long and arduous. The canoe is very useful. During the winter, snow shoes are essential.

Because of threats of Iroquois or British attacks, safety was always foremost on people's minds.

Travelling from Montreal to Quebec City by bus or train takes just a few hours.

Electric lights and appliances such as refrigerators, washers and dryers, dish washers and microwave ovens make life much easier.

In winter, it is extremely cold and apparel brought from Europe must be adapted to the climate. In summer, the heat and humidity as well as the mosquitoes are unbearable.

Typhus, measles and chicken pox are highly contagious diseases which affect many families.

Telephone or internet communications are very easy.

People get water from streams or wells. They heat it on the fire so they can wash themselves from time to time.

Travelling on the high-way by car from downtown Montreal to Pointe-aux-Trembles takes just 20 minutes.

Wood is used for heating. Hot-water bottles are placed under the sheets to warm the beds made of straw or reeds. Bedtime is at sunset because the days are exhausting and candles must not be wasted.

Dim light is also provided by a type of lamp called "bec-de-corbeau". For entertainment, people played card games or music.