

Marguerite's Odyssey

The journeying life of Marguerite Bourgeoys
and the Congrégation de Notre-Dame de Montréal.

*Hello,
I am Marguerite Bourgeoys.*



Welcome to this section on the “odyssey” of my life and of the community I founded. It was not always easy for a young woman from France like me to overcome many different obstacles in order to settle in New France and live out her dreams. It was quite an adventure!

But thanks to my unshakeable faith and the courage and determination of my “sisters”, I never gave up. I was also sustained by my motivation to create, with the help of others, a new society. I have always been convinced that by providing practical instruction, we can help those in need to become more self-reliant and to better their lives. That is why I founded a community of non-cloistered sisters.

The Virgin Mary was my inspiration. Following her example, my companions and I travelled wherever we were needed. The sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame who have come after me have continued my mission and are now present on four continents. What a wonderful outcome!

*Come follow our odyssey and complete the
7 challenges... that the Marguerite-Bourgeoys Museum
in Montreal has prepared for you.*

Marguerite finds her vocation and joins in the dream of Ville-Marie.

Marguerite Bourgeoys's adventure in Canada begins in France, her native land. Her destiny becomes clear to her through the people she meets whose ideas inspire her. Historical events also play an important part in the direction her new life will take.

☞ *Read the four statements below and answer the question for each one. You are given a choice of three answers... will you pick the correct one?*

A- In 1640, Marguerite is 20 years old. One day, she “feels the touch of grace” and decides to “give herself to God.” After she is refused by a cloistered community, she joins the extern congregation of the Congrégation Notre-Dame de Troyes. For thirteen years she lives a very enriching, if sometimes dangerous, experience, which will prepare her for her future adventures in the New World.

➔ *What does Marguerite do while she is in the extern congregation?*

1. Because her mother died, she stays at home and takes care of her younger brothers and sisters.
2. In addition to catechism, she teaches reading and writing to children and women in the poorer areas of Troyes. Her objective is for them to learn how to earn a living.
3. She signs up as a sailor on a ship and travels the seven seas battling pirates.

B- In 1639, a group of Frenchmen, led by Jérôme Le Royer de la Dauversière and Jean-Jacques Olier, found the Société Notre-Dame de Montréal. This group wishes to establish a colony of settlers on the island of Montreal in New France. The establishment of Ville-Marie by Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve and Jeanne Mance, in 1642, will be pivotal in the life of Marguerite Bourgeoys.

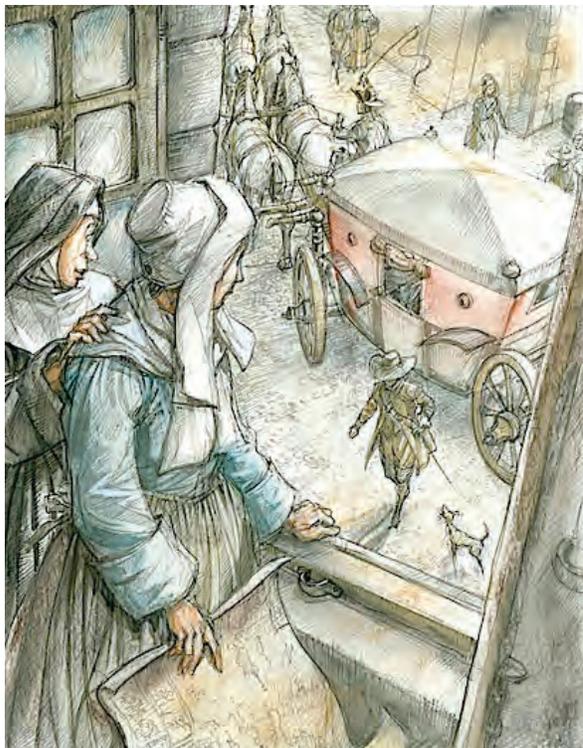
➔ *What is the main purpose of the Société Notre-Dame de Montréal?*

1. Market maple syrup and sell it to the English and Spanish colonies in the Americas.
2. Establish a fishing port and export fur pelts in France.
3. Found an institution which will embody the ideal of the first Christian community for the purpose of converting the Amerindians to Christianity and spreading the Christian faith.

C- In 1652, ten years after the establishment of Ville-Marie, Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve returns to France in search of recruits. The colony needs to be repopulated because many of the first 40 settlers either went back to their native land or died. The Congrégation Notre-Dame à Troyes offers to establish a convent in Ville-Marie, as the Ursulines did in Quebec City. But de Maisonneuve declines their proposal because he thinks that life in the colony is too difficult, precarious and unpredictable for a community of cloistered sisters. He is willing, however, to take with him a secular teacher, Marguerite Bourgeoys, who had efficiently administered and expanded the extern congregation.

➔ **What mission was Marguerite entrusted in New France?**

1. Befriend Jeanne Mance, foundress of the Hôtel-Dieu, first hospital of Ville-Marie, thanks to the generosity of Angélique Faure de Bullion.
2. Open the first school of Ville-Marie and implement the basis of education in the fledgling society.
3. Cook up home-made taffy to pacify the Iroquois so that they would stop attacking the French.



1652 - Troyes, France
Marguerite Bourgeoys prepares to meet Paul
Chomedey de Maisonneuve for the first time.
She will travel with him to New France.

Illustration: Francis Back

D- Jesuit and Recollet missionaries had attempted to convert the Amerindians to Christianity as early as 1611 and 1615. In addition to its “duty to evangelize”, France, like the other colonizing powers, also has commercial interests in Canada such as finding precious metals and a route to Asia.

In the end, it is the fur trade that motivates France to form an alliance with the Montagnais Amerindian nation, declare war on the Iroquois and establish posts and then permanent warehouses in the territory.

However, populating New France was always a difficult challenge for France.

➔ ***Which of these measures HAS NO bearing on the challenge of populating the colony?***

1. The establishment of the Compagnie des Cent-Associés in 1627. In exchange for the monopoly on the fur trade, this state-administered company is mandated to assist thousands of settlers establish themselves in the colony.
2. The peace treaties with the Amerindian nations in view of ensuring the safety of the colony and of its settlers.
3. The high demand for felt hats made from beaver pelts for fashion-conscious gentlemen in Europe.