

Name/Date:

**Social Studies 9 Unit 3 • Building A Nation**

# A New Home

To help you better understand what life was like in Upper Canada from 1815 to 1838, you are to take part in a role-play. Your teacher will give you a role card. You are to pretend you are the person described on this card throughout this activity. While you may be inventive and resourceful, try to base your ideas on what you are learning about Upper Canada and pioneer settlement.



**Step 1.**

Imagine what it might have been like to have arrived in Quebec or Montreal and to wait on the dock before you proceed to your new home in Upper Canada. You've survived a rough sea voyage, maybe on a coffin ship<sup>1</sup>. A bumpy wagon journey inland awaits, and the promise of a new home. Think about what pushed you from your old homeland, and what pulls you to your new home.

**All Settlers Must Perform the Following Duties within two years of the date of the ticket:**

1. Clear and fence 2 hectares (5 acres) for every 40 hectares (100 acres) you have been granted.
2. Build a dwelling house, 5m x 6m (16ft x 20 ft).
3. Clear a roadway along at least one side of your land.

**Step 2.**

Select a role card and decide how to deal with your specific situation. Examine the map provided. Locate your land and study the map's legend. Highlight your land on the map given to you.

**Step 3.**

Visualize in your mind what the land you have purchased would look like. Imagine yourself walking across the land that you are seeing for the first time. Notice the smells, sights, and sounds around you. Look at the reactions of your family members. Experience walking throughout your land and then write a description of your land. **Remember to consider the following points in writing some notes with your description.**

- Is your land flat? hilly? Is it covered with trees? rocks? water? swamps? What is the soil like? Is it good for growing crops? What is the drainage like? What wild animals are in the area? Do you have fresh water available for drinking? Is there a river nearby? Will it be beneficial or harmful?

<sup>1</sup> Coffin Ships were cargo vessels used to carry passengers in the 18th and 19th century, often filled with disease and death. Living conditions and food onboard were deplorable and the ship-owners were not responsible for deaths. They were commonly used to transport Irish immigrants during the Great Famine and Scottish immigrants during the Clearances.

**Step 4.** Think about and make plans of what you would do for your first three months. Make brief notes of your decisions. Search out classmates with skills, land or supplies you may need and work together to develop a plan to get settled on your new land. Make notes describing what things you will be doing in the first three months in your new home. **Remember to consider the following points in writing some notes with your description.**

- What skills do you have?
- What equipment do you have?
- What assistance is available from family members, the religious community, hired help, the Aboriginal people?
- What food supplies have you brought with you?
- What do you do to get by (and start achieving your goals) in the first three months?

**Step 5.** Think about and make plans (notes) for the next two years. (Remember duties you are required to do by law before you get the deed to your land.) **Remember to consider the following points in writing some notes with your description.**

- How do you plan to survive through the first winter?
- What will you do if someone in your family is injured or becomes sick?
- If you are going to grow a crop how will you harvest it?
- How do you plan to meet others in your area? Or does the isolation not bother you?
- Do you feel it is important to co-operate with others in your area? If so, how?
- Do you feel a school should be built nearby? A church? If so, who will build it and how?
- Is transportation a problem? What about roads? Waterways? Do you feel you should be involved in building them?
- How do you "pay for" the goods and services you need and use?
- What ways are there for making money<sup>2</sup>?
- Check above to see if you have completed all the duties you are required to do?

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<sup>2</sup> Potash was one way for settlers to earn cash after the land was cleared. The large hardwood trees were collected and burned in huge bonfires. Water was poured through the ashes. The liquid was boiled in iron pots until it evaporated. The remaining grey powder, known as potash, was sold to European factories where it was used in the manufacture of soap and cosmetics.

**Step 6.** Think about and make plans for the next five years. **Remember to consider the following points in writing notes with your description.**

- How will the area in which you live change over the next five years?
- How do you plan on looking after the soil so it does not become depleted?
- What will you do if you need more land?
- What industries do you think should be developed in the area?<sup>3</sup> How should this be done?
- Is there a need for a village or town to be built in your area? Where would it best be built?
- Would you provide assistance to newcomers? If yes, what kind of assistance? If no, why not?
- What problems have you had in keeping the roads in good condition?
- How have the **Crown reserves**<sup>4</sup> and the **clergy reserves**<sup>5</sup> interfered with your building and maintaining roads?
- How has the land granting system encouraged **speculation**<sup>6</sup>?



**Step 7.** When you have finished the role-play, and completed steps 1-6, it is time to reflect on your new life in Upper Canada and write to your relatives in the old home you left behind. This is the story of your new life, your new home. You may use details you've learned from other lessons in this unit, and are free to adjust your "memory" of what happened during the role-play. Your communication back to the old country will probably take the form of a letter, but you could use other formats, too, if you have a good idea.

**Step 8.** Put it all together -- the observations from Step 3, the 3-month, 2-yr, and 5-yr plans from Steps 4-6, and the letter home from Step 7. The whole bundle is your "A New Home" project -- make it attractive and interesting. Maybe parts of it look like a journal or a story. It could include lists, descriptions, a chronicle of events (what has happened to you), and thoughts about the land, people, challenges, shelter, food, social events, etc. You may also wish to research travel conditions and life aboard an immigrant ship so you can describe your passage to British North America. Many of you probably arrived by boat in Quebec city before continuing on to Upper Canada by wagon. Although you could use existing maps and images, you are encouraged to draw your own. You are also encouraged to weave in information from your Lesson 2B notes and other sources.

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<sup>3</sup> Grist mills for grinding grain and saw mills for planing logs into lumber were needed in pioneer communities. These mills were located near rivers as running water was necessary in the milling process.

<sup>4</sup> **Crown reserve**—one-seventh of all public land was set aside for the British government by the Constitutional Act of 1791. By 1825 these lands were finally sold because they prevented compact settlement, making it difficult to complete roads.

<sup>5</sup> **Clergy reserve**—one-seventh of all public land was set aside for Protestant schools and churches by the Constitutional Act of 1791.

<sup>6</sup> **Speculation**—the act of buying or selling land, at some risk, with the hope of making large profits from future price changes.

# A Township in Upper Canada

0 1 km



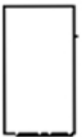
## Legend



Swampy Land



Lake



Settlement  
Lots



Road  
Allowance



River



Clergy  
Reserves  
(Anglican  
Church)



British  
Crown  
Reserves

