

Primary Source Analysis Worksheet

Read the following text from Cartier's diary and answer the questions on the back.

"OF ANOTHER NATION OF INDIANS AND OF THEIR CUSTOMS, MANNER OF LIFE AND WAYS OF CLOTHING THEMSELVES.

....On account of the continuous bad weather with over-cast sky and mist, we remained in the harbour and river, without being able to leave, until [Saturday], the twenty-fifth of the said month [July]. During that time there arrived a large number of savages, who had come to the river [Gaspé basin] to fish for mackerel, of which there is great abundance. They [the savages] numbered, as well men, women as children, more than 300 persons, with some forty canoes. When they had mixed with us a little on shore, they came freely in their canoes to the sides of our vessels. We gave them knives, glass beads, combs and other trinkets of small value, at which they showed many signs of joy, lifting up their hands to heaven and singing and dancing in the canoes. This people may well be called savage; for they are the sorriest folk there can be in the world, and the whole lot of them had not anything above the value of five sous, their canoes and fishing-nets excepted.

They go quite naked, except for a small skin, with which they cover their privy parts, and for a few old furs which they throw over their shoulders. They are not at all of the same race or language as the first we met. They have their heads shaved all around in circles, except for a tuft on the top of the head, which they leave long like a horse's tail. This they do up upon their heads and tie in a knot with leather thongs. They have no dwelling but their canoes, which they turn upside down and sleep on the ground underneath. They eat their meat almost raw, only warming it a little on the coals; and the same with their fish. On [Wednesday July 22], we rowed over in our long-boats to the spot on shore where they were, and went on land freely among them. At this they showed great joy, and the men all began to sing and to dance in two or three groups, exhibiting signs of great pleasure at our coming. But they had made all the young women retire into the wood, except two or three who remained, to whom we have each a comb and a little tin bell, at which they showed great pleasure, thanking the captain [Cartier] by rubbing his arms and his breast with their hands. And the men, seeing we had given something to the women that had remained, made those come back who had fled to the woods, in order to receive the same as the others. These, who numbered some twenty, crowded about the captain and rubbed him with their hands, which is their way of showing welcome. He gave them each a little tin ring of small value; and at once they assembled together in a group to dance; and sang several songs. We saw a large quantity of mackerel which they had caught near the shore with the nets they used for fishing, which are made of hemp thread, that grows in the country where they ordinarily reside; for they only come down to the sea in the fishing-season, as I have been giving to understand.

...If one shows them something they have not got and they know not what it is, they shake their heads and say *nouda*, which means, they have none of it and know not what it is. Of the things they have, they showed us by signs the way grow and how they prepare them. They never eat anything that has a taste of salt in it. They are wonderful thieves and steal everything they can carry off.”

Source: The Voyages of Jacques Cartier, H. P. Biggar. Ottawa, Ontario, 1924. P. 58 - 63.

- 1) What kind of document is it?
- 2) When was it written?
- 3) Who wrote it?
- 4) How does Cartier describe the indigenous people?
- 5) How does that limit the primary source?
- 6) What kind of sources would we need to give us a better understanding of first contact?