



FIERCE Questions for FIERCE Students (and their teachers)

Fierce: Women Who Shaped Canada
By Lisa Dalrymple Illustrated by Willow Dawson
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GENERAL

1. The stories in this book can be divided into three categories:

- stories of women who used their **heads**, especially in times of trouble
- stories of women who were guided by their **hearts**
- stories of women who relied on their own **hands** to survive

In which category would you put each of the ten women and why?

- Select another Canadian woman who intrigues you. This may be someone from history, someone who is living right now or even someone you know in your own life. Write her story or a scene from her life. Consider what you were able to find out about her and how. Also consider the things you don't know and why those details may not be available to you.
- Create a timeline that includes the stories in this book. Add to it other important dates in Canada's history. Were you surprised about any things that happened at the same time?
- Why do you think there are so few women's stories in history books? Whose stories do you usually learn about? Can you think why this might be? What other stories are often left out of Canada's history books?



Marguerite de la Roche

DISCUSS

In 1542, girls and young, unmarried women required guardians or chaperones. Unmarried men did not. Does this seem unfair to you? Consider how restrictions on women have changed over the last few centuries. Are there things that you find are still unfair when it comes to restrictions placed on some groups of people but not others?

CREATE

Using materials found around your home, create a model of how you picture Marguerite's island. Consider how difficult it would have been for the castaways to create shelter, beds, clothing and dishes using only what they could find on the island.



Ttha'naltther

DISCUSS

A very important detail from Ttha'naltther's story in the oral tradition is that she set out on the expedition with her blanket, a knife, matches and a little kettle or pail. Why do you think she took these items to show the Dene people? What significance would they have?

RESEARCH AND PRESENT

Many of the dates and details about Ttha'naltther's story come to us through the York Fort journal written by governor James Knight. He wrote very little about the expedition and never mentioned Ttha'naltther or Wapasu by name. Pick a day in the life of Ttha'naltther, imagine what she was doing, and write about the events from her perspective instead.



Catherine Schubert

DISCUSS

Some writers have said that the Overlanders had a rule against women joining the expedition and that Catherine would have had to argue her case to be allowed to travel with the men. What arguments do you think she might have presented to Thomas McMicking, the leader of the expedition? If you were McMicking, would you have let Catherine travel with the men?

CREATE

An artist named William Hind travelled with another group of Overlanders, who left Fort Garry after the McMicking group. He recorded his journey via sketches and watercolours. Sketch or paint a scene from one of the other stories in this book.



Charlotte Small

DISCUSS

Both Charlotte Small and Catherine Schubert travelled across the Rocky Mountains while they were pregnant and with three children in tow. Catherine is recognized as the first European woman to enter British Columbia by the overland route. However, Charlotte crossed the Rockies over fifty years before Catherine, travelling a route that had been known to Indigenous peoples for many years. Why do you think Canada's history books include so few records and stories about Indigenous peoples?

CREATE

Charlotte completed many journeys in her lifetime. Create a map of your own trips around your town/city, province/territory, country or the world.



Alice Freeman

DISCUSS

Pick a social-justice issue — for example, equal pay for equal work, the need for gender-neutral bathrooms, or whether Canada should welcome more refugees. Divide into two groups and debate opposite sides of this issue. What will your main arguments be?

WRITE

Alice Freeman spent a lot of time writing about social injustice, particularly inequality between men and women. Do you think this is still an issue 130 years later? Do you think Alice Freeman would agree with you? Write an article on this topic as if you were Alice the journalist writing today.



Lucile Hunter

DISCUSS

In 1865, the United States abolished slavery, but there were still many legal and social inequalities facing Black people. Some looked for new opportunities elsewhere, such as the Klondike gold rush in Canada. Many of the other women in this book also moved to a new part of the world. What were they fleeing or running to? What would make you leave behind your family and the home you have today to move to another part of the world?

CREATE

Several of the women in the book have had songs written about them. If you look online, you will find "Marguerite," performed by Geraldine Hollett of the Once, or Mike Ford singing his song "Thanadelthur." Write a song about Lucile and the challenges she faced in her life. You could compose your own music or use a tune that you already know.



Cougar Annie

DISCUSS

Ada Annie's cabin had an outhouse, a wood stove for heat and cooking, and no electricity. She collected her drinking water from a small creek or rain barrels. Her closest neighbours lived a long way away, but she was surrounded by the plants and animals she loved. Would you like to live like her? Why or why not?

TELL A STORY

Cougar Annie liked to tell stories but she didn't write them down. Think of a favourite story from your own life. Make a mental note of the important details you need to remember. Think of ways you might make the story interesting — using body language, tone of voice or acting out certain parts — then tell your story to one of your classmates.



Victoria Cheung

DISCUSS

Victoria witnessed and faced discrimination in Canada and in China. How do you think she felt in the face of this dual discrimination? Do you think it discouraged her or made her more determined to help the people who needed her?

WRITE

Victoria Cheung was so important to so many people that hundreds lined the streets for her funeral procession and 3000 wreaths were laid in her honour. Write a poem about Victoria or another person from history who is particularly significant to you.



Joan Bamford Fletcher

DISCUSS

Japanese soldiers were not used to taking orders from a Canadian, and certainly not from a woman. If you were in Joan's position, how would you gain their respect?

WRITE

There are few official records available about Joan Bamford Fletcher's time in Sumatra, although she did write letters to her family back in Canada. That's how we know each trip across the island took up to twelve hours. What is the longest trip you have taken? Write a letter to a friend telling them about something exciting you saw or did on the journey.



Mona Parsons

DISCUSS

In Vechta Prison, the guards treated the prisoners harshly, hoping to break their spirits. Mona engaged in little rebellions. She stitched knots into the socks she knitted for the German army and attempted to help the other women maintain a positive attitude by singing or exchanging recipes. How would such little acts of defiance help her survive? How do you maintain your spirit during difficult times?

ACT IT OUT

When Mona was younger, she studied acting in Nova Scotia and even moved to New York to become an actress. Create a scene from Mona's story and perform it live or make a video.

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