

FLCQ 66/67

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND

Department of English Language and Literature.

NOTE TO STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS

Students are asked to make every effort to answer Section I, on Family names (even if only in a paragraph), to report on the distribution of Christmas mummering (Section II, #1), and to give as much information on Section IV (Frightening Figures) and Section V (singing games, etc.) as possible. These are the sections we are especially interested in at the moment. But we hope that you will give us information on at least one topic from each section. Please answer in full detail any particular parts of this project that most interest you.

Answers should be written on separate sheets of paper (using only one side of each sheet), and should refer by number to the items in the assignment. Please be sure to write your name on the top right hand corner of each sheet of paper used.

Add the following details on a cover sheet:

Course and hour (e.g., English 100, Mon. 10:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m., etc.) - - - - -

Instructor: - - - - -

Student's Name and Home Address: - - - - -

Birthplace - - - - -

Names of those who have helped you by giving information; their birthplaces and present place of residence:

PLEASE SUBMIT ANSWER SHEETS TO YOUR CLASS INSTRUCTOR BEFORE THE END OF THE FIRST WEEK OF CLASSES IN JANUARY.

I

FAMILY NAMES AND SETTLEMENTS

Information about your family's history and of other Newfoundland families would be very valuable. Surprisingly little is known specifically about what parts of the British Isles or elsewhere Newfoundlanders actually came from, and the places they have lived on the island. Some families have this information in the family Bible, or other records, and others pass it on by word of mouth. In few cases is this information available to students of Newfoundland history, and, unless it is recorded by you, it may well be lost for all time. You are the person in the best position to keep alive this information and help us to put it together. We would appreciate whatever contribution you can make on this important topic.

To help you organize this we suggest you take first your father's family line, including his father and his mother and work backward as far as you can. Then do the same with your mother's line. Since all of us had four grandparents, and life is short, even information on your father's side only would be appreciated. If yours is one of the unusual families that has preserved family information from even further back, we would be glad to get it. But even incomplete accounts can be extremely useful. Sometimes even partial knowledge of the place of origin of several families living in a place will give us important clues on the origin of the settlement.

What we need is specific information about any or all branches of your family. This information should include:

Names; origins outside of Newfoundland, in as specific detail as possible (country, county, and town or community); dates, or approximate period, of arrival in Newfoundland; dates or approximate period, of moving from one Newfoundland place to another (give names of places).

Any additional information would be useful.

IMPORTANT: No information about a specific family will be made public without written permission from a senior member of that family.

MUMMERING

1. We are trying to find how many areas of Newfoundland have had some form of Christmas disguising and house visiting often called Mummering or Janneying. Even a brief report that it existed in your community and whether it is still carried on would be helpful. If you can say something on this point please do so, even if only briefly.

2. A more detailed description, and particularly complete details of one set of disguises and one house visit would be more helpful than many generalizations.

3. We would like to get specific details on any of the following:

a) What do people call those who dress up in various disguises during Christmas in your community, or in any others you know? (Name each place.) (Some names used include fools, mummers, darbies, janneys, johnnys, jenneys, guisers, geezers, maskers, dress-ups, soldiers, white boys, ribbon fools, etc.) If there is more than one name, which did the older people use? When did the newer one(s) come in? Please try to find out what brought in the change.

b) On what day or days during the Christmas season did people dress up? At what times of day or night did they visit other houses? About how many houses? How many people were in any one group? How did they announce themselves? Give examples of typical ways of asking admission, and typical replies. If they have any special way of talking, please describe it and give examples of what they might say.

c) Describe their behavior while going between houses? (Noisy? Singing? Marching or casual walking? Peaceable or rough? Any fights or chasing? Describe what they carried in their hands (sticks? walking canes? split? hobby horse, etc.) and how used?

d) If admitted how did they behave? (Were they quiet or rowdy? Describe any tricks they might play) If they were expected to entertain, what would they do? (e.g., dance? sing? recite? tell stories or jokes? play musical instruments?)

e) Describe how people tried to find out who the disguised visitors were, and how the visitors reacted. Were there any differences in the ways men or women behaved?

f) If anyone in your community remembers an old act or play which the visitors sometimes performed, we should be very glad to have any details however small. Although we only have a few reports of this perhaps you can find someone who remembers such details as the fight(s), the collection, or the names and costumes of characters. These last vary from place to place but might include some of the following: Father Christmas, Roomer, Jack or Jan, George, Patrick, Turkish Knight, the Doctor and some Devil figure, a Captain, someone dressed in woman's clothes, etc. etc.

g) Give a complete description from top to toe of at least one common disguise and one more interesting, odd or amusing. You might add to this other details on the kinds of materials used for costumes and how these were made up. Some materials used include the following: Old clothes, quilts, sheets, pillows, rags, unusual clothes, new clothes, oil clothes, underwear, white clothes, animal skins, cardboard, birch rind, boots and shoes, headgear, feathers, ribbons, paper, uniforms, animal disguises, etc.

h) In which of the following ways did mummers disguise their faces? Paint? soot? blacking? lipstick? veils? stocking? bag? box? mask? (of cloth, oilskin, paper, cardboard, wood, animal skin, store-bought, etc.) Describe as many of these as you can in detail. For the masks, especially, even a rough drawing would be helpful.

CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS: ANIMAL AND BIRD

ANIMAL DISGUISES.

Have you seen or heard of a horse figure or horse's head used as part of Christmas activities? Some of the names reported are Hobby Horse, Horsey Hops, Lop-chops. Which of these names, if any, have you heard? What others do you know? We would be glad to get information on any of the following:

1. Who made the horse-figure?
2. How was it made? (Mention size, details of manufacture such as wood, nails, cloth, fur, paint used, appearance; did it have eyes, nose, mouth, ears, etc.; how lifelike was it? Was a real horse's head ever used? How were the movable jaws constructed and operated? etc.)
3. How was the head carried? How was the carrier disguised or covered? If the horse had wooden legs or feet were they movable? How were they operated?
4. Describe the behavior of the figure and the reactions of those involved.
5. What other animal figures have you heard of which are used during the Christmas season? (We should like to get reports of the Christmas Bull, or figures which include cows' heads, rams' or sheep's heads (sometimes called The Derby Ram) or any other animal figure. Describe the figure and its use fully.)
6. Write down what you know of any song, speeches, dialogue or play connected with any of these figures.
7. WREN. Can you give any information about Hunting the Wren (or Ran)? When did it take place and for how long? How was the procession organized and who took part. Describe especially how the wren was secured, prepared, decorated and carried; also the house-visits, drinking, what was collected and how the collection was used). Was any use made of disguise or costume? If there was a song please give the words.
8. OTHER CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS. We shall be pleased to have descriptions of any other Christmas plays, games or customs, such as "Shoeing the horse", "selling" a man for being away from home on Christmas Day, etc.

FRIGHTENING FIGURES

1. Sometimes parents and other adults have various ways of getting children to behave themselves. What is said to children at such times? For example, are children sometimes threatened, either playfully or seriously, with such things as the Boogie-man?
(There is a wide variety of such threats and figures in Newfoundland and reports include the Boo-man, Jack o'Lantern/Jacky Lantern/ Jack the Lantern, Rawhead and Bloody Bones, The Black Man, the fairies, witches, Boo-baggers, the Devil, the big fish, mouse, rat, bear, Jack the Ripper, the Hockshaw Man, the Crust Man and others.) Please describe each one you have heard of and give an example of the threats used in each case. Were the threats playful or serious? Are children really frightened when threatened? Why?
2. For which of the following reasons were children threatened:
 - because they were naughty;
 - to prevent them from going to dangerous places;
 - to prevent them interfering with animals, crops, tools, etc.;
 - to get them in before dark;
 - to induce them to sleep, etc.Give any reasons you have heard with examples of the actual threats.
3. Do the frightening figures you have heard of live in a particular place? Where exactly is each supposed to live? What local place-names include references to frightening figures?
4. If local people are sometimes used to frighten children or if children are frightened by such people (perhaps this may be someone who acts rather oddly or is unusual in some way), please describe as fully as possible.
5. What threats, if any, are used which involve such people as the doctor, nurse, policeman, teacher, priest, stranger, etc. Give examples of the ways in which such threats or warnings are said.
6. If the Mummies or Janneys frighten children, describe how and why the children (and sometimes adults) are scared. Give examples of any threats which involve the Mummies or Janneys. If the mummies brought a hobby-horse with them and it was used to frighten, describe (a) how it scared people, (b) who were most scared.
7. Write down any rhymes or songs which include references to anything which frightens people, and especially to anything which scares children.
8. The words Boo, Boo-man, Bogie, Boogie-man, Bully-boo, Boo-bagger, etc. sometimes mean something quite different from the frightening figures listed above. Give examples of any other meanings you have heard for any of them.

SINGING GAMES, RHYMES, CHANTS AND RIDDLES

Students have given us samples of the many varieties of Newfoundland games, rhymes and riddles. These change from place to place. We would like some from each part of Newfoundland. Please give those you have heard.

1. SINGING GAMES: Ring games, line games, hiding games, such as: London Bridge; Green Gravel(s); King _____ was King _____'s son; Little Sally _____; Hoist your sails/tails and run; and any others. Please give the words, and describe how each game is played.

2. RHYMES CHILDREN USE: At end of school; making fun of teacher or other people; teasing or taunting other children; nonsense and "backwards" rhymes; 24th of May or other holiday rhymes; etc. For games: Rhymes for counting out; skipping or jump rope; ball bouncing; other game rhymes.

3. RHYMES GROWN-UPS USE WITH SMALL CHILDREN: Naming the fingers or toes; pointing out facial features or parts of body; tickling and "creeping" rhymes; knee or lap-bouncing; for handclapping, etc. Describe the action that goes with each rhyme.

4. RHYMING RIDDLES AND TRICKY QUESTIONS: Here are some common beginnings:

- a. As I was going over _____ bridge....
- b. The wind was west and west sailed we....
- c. Four legs up and four legs down....
- d. Long, slick and slender....
- e. Through a rock/Through a reel....
- f. Why is the moon always poor?
- g. What does a boat always leave behind?
- h. Why is Fogo like a _____ match?
- i. What goes up when the rain comes down?

We have very few examples of the following types:

- j. Riddles with queer, nonsensical words.
- k. Riddles with a story, e.g., A fellow was going to be hung unless he could tell a riddle. Some of the riddles the fellow tells include: Love I sit...; Horn ate horn...; ... a hole the fox did make; Under gravel I did travel...; etc.

5. Grown-ups often give children a special explanation that isn't serious about the following: (a) Snow. The first snowfall (Birds, feathers, cotton, etc.) (b) Thunder. (Barrels; potatoes; rocks, bowling, voices.) (c) Someone (or thing) in the moon. (Who or what is there? How and why did he/it get there?)

Please give a detailed description of how or when these are said, and exactly how each is phrased.

6. What terms do you know for the game of jumping from one ice pan to another? For skimming rocks over water? (e.g., skipping the rocks/water; ducks and drakes, etc.)

VI.

NEWFOUNDLAND WORDS AND PRONUNCIATIONS

1. FISHING TERMS. What names are used for the various parts of boats? Nets? Stages? Fishing gear in general? Details on one or more of these, and a rough drawing with arrows pointing to each named part, would be most helpful. If different terms are known for any one part (in your community or some other community you know) please be sure to name the community concerned.
2. THE VERB "TO BE". In Newfoundland this verb has a wonderful variety of forms which have important historical links with England and Ireland. One form, as it is found in school textbooks, is as follows:

I am	I am not
you are	you are not
he/she/it is	he/she/it is not
we are	we are not
you are	you are not
they are	they are not

Following the above pattern write a full list of the forms heard in your community (e.g., I be, I bees, you ent, thee bissen, 'er is, you'm, they'm, etc.). Please include all alternative forms and indicate where possible if older or younger people use a particular form, making some general statement about whether a given form is common to all age groups or limited in some way to particular groups.

3. TERMS USED IN OTHER TASKS AND OCCUPATIONS. These could include the following:
 - a. Woods work (a description of the tasks with names of implements, trees, hauling operations, etc.).
 - b. Household, garden, yard or other area around the house (e.g., household tasks such as breadmaking, sewing, knitting, making rugs and quilts, etc.; haymaking, keeping animals, house-building, types of outbuildings, etc.).
 - c. Special conditions of weather, water and ice (e.g., words for various types of weather:-- dirty, lowering, breezing up, etc.; words for ice conditions:-- slob, ballycatter, bruckly, sish, etc.).
4. Other interesting or unusual words and phrases, including old Irish, Scottish, Welsh, French or similar words used by people in your community. Irish examples would be: sleeveen, maneen, loran agorn mavornceen, oonshuck.

VII

NEWFOUNDLAND SAYINGS, PROVERBS, AND COMPARISONS

The speech of Newfoundlanders is unusually rich in colourful ways of expression. Among these, old sayings, proverbs and comparisons are common. We are most anxious to collect as many of these as possible, and learn how people use them. Please write down the actual words people use without changing them and indicate what age group uses them.

While all kinds will be gratefully received, we are especially interested at present in those concerning the following subjects:

1. Fishing and the sea (e.g., You can't tell the mind of a squid; A fish in the basket is worth two on the hook; Fish has fins and tails; Fish in summer, fun in winter; After seven large waves come three small ones).
2. Weather (e.g., When the wind is in the east, 'tis neither good for man nor beast; Mackerel sky and a mare's tail makes a lofty ship carry a low sail; Snow in May is good for sore eyes; Crawling spiders is a sign of rain).
3. Love and Marriage (e.g., Marriage is an eye-opener; Fish or no fish I'll be married in the fall; Love is a sweet dream, marriage is an alarm clock; Never make love by the garden gate for love is blind but the neighbors aint.)

4. Stupidity (e.g., Stun as a caplin; So stupid he'd -----;
Fools and children tell the truth.

He hasn't the sense (or, as much sense), as _____

She has a head like a turnip.

He has no more brains than a sculpin.

If brains were gunpowder/dynamite/_____, you _____

He doesn't know _____ from _____

When brains were given out, _____

Once a fool always a fool.).