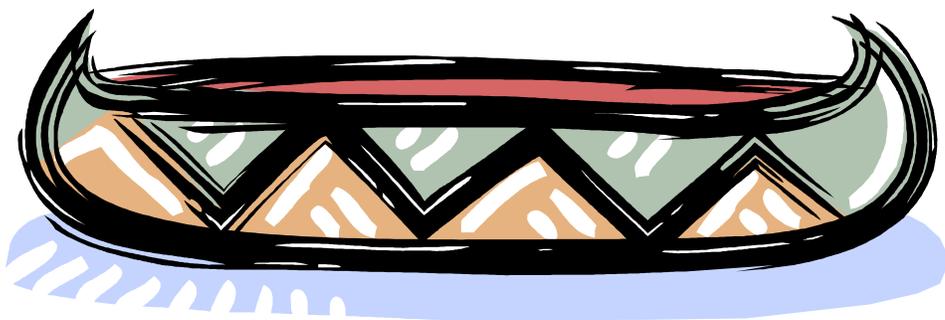


SIMON FRASER And the RAGING RIVER

A Musical
Play for
Elementary Students



Script and music
By
Gerda Blok-Wilson

Introduction

SIMON FRASER AND THE RAGING RIVER is dedicated to teacher extraordinaire, Ken Sharp, Principal, Anjula Corbin and the grade 4 students at École Spruceland, Prince George, British Columbia, 2007 who were studying Canadian history and early exploration of North America.

In elementary school, students respond eagerly to subject matter which includes creative drama, movement, music and visual art. The act of conveying curriculum this way enhances the student's ability to imagine, transform and authentically experience learning. Spruceland students added many of their ideas about what they learned in Social Studies class and improvised some of their own dialogue to carry the script between songs.

In experimenting with building arts resources which encourage language development and a "hands – on" approach to understanding curriculum, I have attempted to include pattern, repetition, rhythm, rhyme and song to develop verbal skills.

After two different performances of the play, I decided to write it out formally so other classes might be able to use it. My hope is that this play will encourage students and teachers to look at creatively transforming learning in the classroom with the skills and ideas available in their classroom. I think the show is appropriate for grades 3 – 6.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The cast is made up of Simon Fraser, John Stuart, Jules Quesnel, Michael (a made up crew member) and narrator which can be divided up so all members of the cast have spoken parts. The costumes were caps/handkerchief; gingham/red shirts; dark pants, socks and shoes. I had the narrators wear school T-shirt or black but anything would work. Students will have many ideas. Let them research voyageur clothing.

THE SET

The set can be anything from a big sign that says SIMON FRASER AND THE RAGING to a picture display of things that the students determine (canoe, diary, trapped wildlife,).

THE PLOT

Simon Fraser's journey on the river named for him is one of the greatest feats in the exploration of Canada. Although Fraser along with lesser known explorers, John Stuart and Jules Quesnel, failed to find a trading route to the Pacific Ocean, their exploration helped to open up North America and the province of British Columbia.

From the small trading post of Fort George, on the morning of May 22nd, 1808, Simon Fraser and his crew set out in four birch-bark canoes. Thirty minutes long, the "The Raging River" is a representation of his seventy – one day journey and raises issues including the affects of early exploration and the technologies used (transportation).

THE STAGING

Most of the action and speaking should occur downstage center. For visual effect, I recommend using different formations for each scene. Transitions can be used with the songs or tagged on by singing a cappella.

1. Imagine a Dream

After the whole cast finishes the song, they find their first formation on the stage. The narrator(s) introduce Fraser, Stuart and Quesnel.

2. Paddle Hard and Sing

The cast (including narrators) form into 4 canoes with the bows man in front so you can have as many as 6 – 8 in a canoe. Ask students to paddle to the beat. I had the students switch bows man each verse/chorus.

3. Riversong

Following the song create the sound of river rapids by having the students begin drumming against 1) stage stairs, 2) front stage, and 3) back stage wall to create the effect of river rapids. This can be done in staggered 3 – 4 groups so the sound builds. Finally everyone is front stage loudly stamping and patting knees. Ask students to decrescendo to very soft and then go right into scene 4.

4. Riversong chorus

While Fraser and Jules Quesnel rescue Michael, the cast sings the chorus and moves into the canoe formation again. Fraser, Quesnel and Michael join the canoes. The chorus can be repeated for the amount of transition time.

Soft steady drumming begins for Scene 5 and gets stronger when Fraser's crew is being chased. The drumming eventually fades.

5. Fur Traders Explorin' song

Ask students to develop movement.

6. Imagine a Dream (Reprise)

SCENE 1

Narrator: In 1808, as history tells us, there was an explorer, Simon Fraser, who had three jobs.

Narrator: As a partner in the Northwest Trading Company, the first was to build forts west of the Rocky Mountains.

Narrator: His second was to create a friendship with the local native people and establish trading relations with them.

Narrator: AND his third mission was to discover a way to get from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, to expand the Northwest Fur trading Company.

Narrator: Now, Simon Fraser seemed to be your regular adventurous explorer...

Narrator: ...very curious...

Narrator: ...somewhat brave, courageous and rugged...

Narrator: ...moderately organized...

Narrator: ...extremely literate...

Narrator: ...**AND**, **definitely**, a leader.

Narrator: He really seemed to have all the qualities that any explorer before him had.

Narrator: Although, at the age of 25, he was the North West Company's **youngest** partner.

Narrator: He was smart, intelligent **and** responsible...

Narrator: And he was always in search of ways to establish trading posts and forts to reduce the cost of his exploration and improve the North West Company's wealth.

Narrator: So, his boss, William McGillivray, chose Simon Fraser to find a route to the Pacific Ocean.

Narrator: He was told to follow a river that explorer and fur trader Alexander Mackenzie had tried 12 years earlier.

Song # 1 Imagine a Dream

1. Imagine a Dream

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♩=120

The first system of music consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, starting with a whole rest followed by a quarter note G4. The middle staff is the right-hand piano accompaniment in treble clef, starting with a half rest followed by a quarter note G4, then a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The bottom staff is the left-hand piano accompaniment in bass clef, starting with a quarter note G2, then a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The dynamic marking *mf* is placed below the first measure of the piano accompaniment.

5

The second system of music consists of three staves. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "ma - gine, i - ma gine a dream! Fol-low-ing a ri - ver to thesea. I -". The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern as the first system.

9

The third system of music consists of three staves. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "ma - gine, i - ma gine a dream! To con-nect our coun-try, How great that would". The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern as the first system.

13

be! In eigh - teen hun-dred and eight, Si - mon Fra - ser

17

and his crew pad - dled four ca - noes down a ri - ver no one

21

knew. His boss made a plea: "Find a route

25

to the sea, so we can build fur trad - ing posts for the North-west com - pa -



SCENE 2:

Narrator: **ALRIGHT**...now about Simon Fraser's adventure that began May 22, 1808.

(Simon Fraser enters from stage right, walks to his desk to write in his journal).

Narrator: Simon Fraser was accompanied by his good friend and lieutenant, John Stuart...

(Stuart enters from stage right and stands left of Simon Fraser)

Stuart: Sir, the four canoes are ready with as many supplies as we could pack.

Fraser: Very good, John! I trust that if we run out of food, we can catch fish and look for wild vegetables.

Narrator: *AND*, a younger clerk, Jules Quesnel

(Quesnel enters and stands right of Fraser)

Quesnel: The crew is ready for instructions, Sir...and our guides.

Fraser: We have unknown territory to deal with. Our guides will be able to talk to the other native communities and show us the way.

Quesnel: I know, Simon, without them, we wouldn't be able to make this trip.

Stuart: **And**, they can help us find that extra food we'll need.

Fraser: Good point, John. Now, tell everyone that we leave tomorrow morning at 5:00 am, SHARP!

Quesnel & Stuart: Yes, sir!

Song # 2 Paddle Hard and Sing

2. Paddle hard and sing

Driven

Gerda Blok-Wilson

Measures 1-4: Vocal line has rests. Piano accompaniment begins with a forte (f) dynamic. The bass line features eighth notes and chords, while the treble line has eighth notes and chords.

Measures 5-8: Vocal line continues with rests. Piano accompaniment continues with eighth notes and chords in both hands.

Measures 9-12: Vocal line has lyrics: "Pad - dle hard voy - a - geur, pad - dle hard and sing!". Piano accompaniment continues with eighth notes and chords.

Measures 13-16: Vocal line has lyrics: "Pad - dle hard voy - a - geur, Let those pad - dles swing!". Piano accompaniment continues with eighth notes and chords.

*Students imitate paddling their canoes.



SCENE 3

Narrator: Now, the trip down the river was not at **all** easy....

Narrator: It was not even safe!

Narrator: In fact, it was down right dangerous!

Narrator: Because Simon Fraser and his crew began the exploration during spring run-off, things proved to be really challenging!

Narrator: Canoes crashed into rocks...

Narrator: Supplies were lost in the rapids...

Narrator: Food was scarce...

Narrator: Black flies and mosquitoes swarmed every moment!

Narrator: When the weather was rainy, everything was soaking wet.

Narrator: AND when his crew members had to portage over land, they suffered blisters to their feet & thorns got into their heels.

ALL: This was definitely no ordinary adventure for Simon Fraser and he wrote in his journal: "Here we are, in a strange Country, surrounded with dangers, and difficulties...Our situation is critical and highly unpleasant; however we shall endeavour to make the best of it; what cannot be cured, must be endured."

Song # 3 Riversong

**To create the sound of river rapids immediately following the song, have the students begin drumming against 1) stage stairs, 2) front stage, 3) back stage wall to create the effect of river rapids. This can be done in staggered 3 – 4 groups so the sound builds. Finally everyone is front stage loudly stamping and patting knees. Ask students to decrescendo to very soft and then go right into the next scene*

3. Riversong

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♩=100

The piano introduction consists of two staves. The right hand plays a melody of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The left hand plays a bass line of eighth notes: G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2. The key signature has one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 8/8.

3

Ri - - ver spark - ling and clear,

The musical notation for the first line of lyrics shows the vocal line starting on a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern as the introduction.

5

Ri - - ver wild - and free,

The musical notation for the second line of lyrics shows the vocal line starting on a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern as the introduction.

7

Ri - - ver some - thing to fear,

The musical notation for the third line of lyrics shows the vocal line starting on a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern as the introduction.