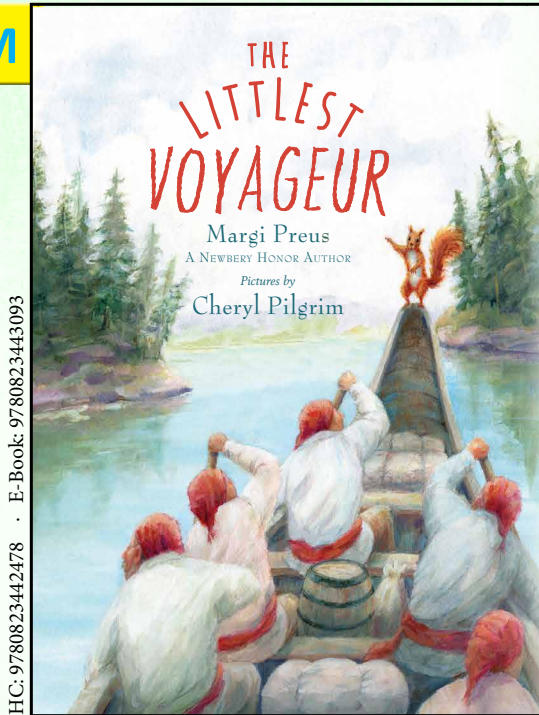


# HOLIDAY HOUSE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Grades  
2–5



STEM



HC: 9780823442478 · E-Book: 9780823443093

MARGARET FERGUSON BOOKS

## THE LITTLEST VOYAGEUR

by MARGI PREUS

illustrated by CHERYL PILGRIM

★ “[An] entertaining and informative narrative . . . heartwarming.”  
—*Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review

“Preus plumps up historical facts with flesh—and leaves the reader knowing what it might feel like to be a smart, intrepid squirrel finding his way as an adventurer while standing up for his fellow creatures.”—*New York Times*

### ABOUT THE BOOK

It is 1792 and a red squirrel named Jean Pierre Petit Le Rouge has stowed away on a canoe to fulfill his dream of joining a group of voyageurs—men who paddle canoes filled with goods to a trading post thousands of miles away.

When the group finally arrives at the trading post Le Rouge is in for a terrible shock—the voyageurs have traveled all those miles to collect beaver pelts! With the help of Monique, a smart and sweet flying squirrel, Le Rouge organizes his fur-bearing friends of the forest to ambush the men and try and convince them to quit being voyageurs.

#### Next Generation Science Standards:

4–PS3: Energy, 4–PS4: Waves and Their Applications in Technologies for Information Transfer, 4–LS1: From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes, 4–ESS2: Earth’s Systems, 4–ESS3: Earth and Human Activity, 3–5–ETS1: Engineering Design

#### Guided Reading Level: S

Grade Level Equivalent: 4

### BEFORE READING

Discuss the title and the cover illustration. Make predictions:

- What is the setting? Where and when will this story take place?
- Who is the *Littlest Voyageur*?
- Who are the men in the boat?
- What type of boat are they in?
- Why are they dressed the same?
- What word can be found within the word *voyageur*?
- What language do the characters speak?
- What is a *voyage*?
- Why do you think *voyageur* is spelled with a *u*?
- What is a *voyageur*?



HolidayHouse.com



#TheLittlestVoyageur



## DURING READING

### Vocabulary Study

As you read, look for new vocabulary words and write down their inferred meanings based on the context.

Some new vocabulary words may include:

*the Anishinaabeg, brigade, canoe, cargo, goods, la vieille, northmen, pelt, portages, provisions, rapids, stockade, tête-à-tête, trading post*

### Structure & Style

The *structure* of a book refers to how the author divides the story into parts. How does the author connect and resolve each chapter? What are the actions, thoughts, and feelings of the characters? How do these elements build around a central idea or theme?

As you read *The Littlest Voyageur*, think about how the author structures the book. You will find that she writes many short chapters. Think about the following questions:

- How does the structure contribute to the meaning and style of the book?
- How does the presentation of information enhance your understanding of the book?
- Why do you think the author broke the book up into many chapters?

As you read, summarize each chapter in a few sentences. Consider using these tips:

- In order to decide which details to include in the summary of a book chapter, consider *who, what, when, where, why*, and *how*. Take notes that answer these questions.
- Begin each summary by stating the main characters and setting of the chapter in one or two sentences.
- Include the main idea, or the main theme, and the supporting details of the chapter.
- Where did they travel? As you read, write down the places that the voyageurs have traveled. Include names of waterways and towns.

## AFTER READING

- In the beginning of the story, Le Rouge is very curious. What questions does he have about the voyageurs? When do you first learn that the voyageurs are French?
- Where and when does the story take place? How does the author develop the setting? How does the author use imagery to describe the setting?
- Who is telling the story? How does Jean Pierre Petit Le Rouge's point of view affect the story? How would the story change if one of the voyageurs were telling it?
- How do the illustrations enhance the meaning and the tone of the story? What information did you get from the illustrations that you did not get from the text/words?
- How does the author weave history and fiction together?
- Who is the main character? What kind of squirrel is he? How does Le Rouge describe the voyageurs? Compare and contrast Le Rouge to the voyageurs. How are they alike and how are they different? How does Jean Pierre Petit Le Rouge get his name?
- Explain how Le Rouge gets on the canoe without being seen. How does he manage to stay with the crew?
- Describe the relationship between Le Rouge and Jean Gentile. What does Le Rouge do for Gentile? What does Gentile do for La Rouge? How is Jean Gentile different from the other voyageurs? Why is this important to Le Rouge?





- How do you think the author feels about books and literature? What role does this theme play in the story?
- How does the author develop the themes of bravery, friendship, teamwork, and love?
- Explain how Le Rouge was helpful and how he could be annoying on the journey. What other synonyms are used by the voyageurs to describe Le Rouge? How did Le Rouge act like a human? How did he act like a squirrel?
- What was life like on a brigade? Why was singing important?
- There were many problems that got resolved during the long journey. Consider the follow types of conflict: man vs. man, man vs. self, man vs. nature, man vs. fate, and man vs. society. Create and fill in a problem-and-solution chart with these examples from the story.
- What difficult decisions did the characters have to make?
- How did Le Rouge and Jean Gentile change from the beginning to the end of the story? Do you think their relationship had an impact on those changes? How do both Le Rouge and Jean Gentile use their passion to live their lives to the fullest?
- If you could become a voyageur and trade something on the river, what would it be? Would you consider becoming a voyageur?
- Find parts of the story that are humorous. How does the author create the tone? At what point does the tone grow dark? What was the irony at the end of the book?
- After going to the trading post, Le Rouge does not want to go to the party the voyageurs have been looking forward to. He says, "As for me, I could not enjoy the party. Even though I am red, I was—How do you say?—blue" (p. 79). What does this mean? How is he feeling? How does he handle his feelings? What good comes out of this?
- How does Le Rouge meet Monique?
- There are different ways of thinking about humans using the skin and fur of animals. Why was it thought to be okay for the native people to use the skins and fur of animals? Why was it criminal for the fur traders in the eyes of the animals? What are the consequences of humans killing beavers for fur hats?
- What does Monique mean when she says, "Men are so ill-suited to life on this earth. . . . They can't even keep themselves warm, except by stealing other creatures' skins" (p. 90). How do you feel about this statement?
- How does Le Rouge plan on changing the minds of the voyageurs? Did his plan work?
- What would be a good title for a sequel to *The Littlest Voyageur*?

### History Spotlight

Answer Jean Pierre Le Rouge's questions based on the information you learned in this story.

- Where did the voyageurs travel?
- What did they do while they were away?
- What did they take with them when they started their journey?
- What did they bring back?
- Why?





Discuss the following questions:

- When did voyageurs live?
- What physical and emotional traits did voyageurs have?
- What did voyageurs wear?
- How did they live?
- What did they like to do?
- Why were voyageurs important?
- When was the fur trade?
- What time of year did the voyage begin? When did it end?
- Why did the fur trade come to Canada?

### Figurative Language Study

Describe how the author uses figurative language to add layers of meaning of the story. Find examples from the story.

- Personification—giving human characteristics to something non-human, like the wind or fog
- Metaphor—a direct comparison between two or more things
- Allusion—referencing something—like a literary, scientific, or artistic work—without mentioning it specifically

## RESEARCH PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Research the fur trade industry. Consider the following:

- Who was involved in the fur trade?
- Why was the fur trade important to different people?
- Discuss the role of the Native People in the fur trade.
- Who were the Anishinaabeg?
- Why did the fur trade end?
- What impact did beavers have on the fur trade? Why?
- How did the voyageurs use science, technology, engineering, and math during their journey to the trading post from Montreal?

### Group Project

Research the trade route from Montreal to Grand Portage using places from the story, and then plan and create a map of the voyageurs journey.

## ABOUT THE CREATORS

Photo Credit: Leslie Plesser



**MARGI PREUS**, the author of *The Littlest Voyageur*, is a *New York Times* best-selling author of several books for young readers—including the Newbery Honor book *Heart of a Samurai*. Her most recent books include *Shadow on the Mountain* and *Celebritrees: Historic and Famous Trees of the World*, a picture book illustrated by Rebecca Gibbon. Margi Preus lives in Duluth, Minnesota.



**CHERYL PILGRIM**, the illustrator of *The Littlest Voyageur*, is also a public-school art teacher. She recently wrote and illustrated the picture book *Big and Little: A Story of Opposites*. She lives near Houston, Texas.

Guide created by Marla Conn, MS, Ed., reading/literacy specialist and educational consultant.



HolidayHouse.com



#TheLittlestVoyageur

JS 5.2020