

## Grade 8 Narrative

### Oh, Canada

The border to Canada was not a formidable opponent when we started to trek north for our annual fishing trip. This would be the last year to enter this beautiful country without presenting a passport to the border guards under the red and white maple leaf flag. Our old, Caribbean-sea blue Suburban pulled through the passage lanes, we answered the woman behind the smoky glass that we were indeed the children of the driver and entering the country of our own accord, and we settled in for the rest of the journey. The beauty of this country's rocky countryside was an interesting contrast to the flat plains of our home in middle Nebraska.

My brothers and I gauged the amount of time it would take to reach Thunder Bay, Ontario, reminding each other of the mile-per-hour timing versus the kilometer-per-mile timing. We knew we were approaching this small city on the shores of Northern Lake Superior when we caught a whiff of the paper plant at the southern edge of the city limits. The putrid smell of wet wood being processed to paper was much worse than I remembered it to be; the results of this process permeated our car, the air, and my nose for several kilometers; we breathed a sigh of true relief when the air cleared enough for us to breathe deeply again. We paused for a supper break and a view of Kakabeka Falls. Legend has it that if you listened carefully, you could hear the cry of the Ojibwa maiden as she cries for her lost love. The falls thundered in our ears as we crossed the man-made bridge to the other side, and for brief moments along the way I found myself feeling the thrill of momentary fear as my overactive mind took me over the bridge railing into the roaring waters in an imaginary fall.

We pulled ourselves away from the beauty of the falls and the bay and continued north. Thunder Bay held our interest for a bit more as this last highway of northern civilization led us past the Terry Fox monument marking his run across the country to raise awareness and funds for cancer research. We stopped at the lookout and gazed out at the huge pile of rock in the middle of the bay known as Sleeping Giant. The enormity of this rock brought to mind the idea of an iceberg, knowing that what we were seeing was only a small portion of the formation. We gathered ourselves and boarded the bright blue beast bearing our fishing and camping gear. Heading further north we took a winding highway around Lake Nipigon and through many small towns. The drive was long, but aside from the logging trucks that rumbled our ride, it was picture postcard beautiful. We watched for streams of water that flowed out of rocks upon the face of the high cliffs, and we tried to spot loons diving for their meals out on the lake. After what seemed to me to be a day's long travel, we passed through the last small town before reaching our camp. Where we were headed was only marked on local maps; the bound atlas that brought us this far now showed nothing but a road to nowhere. Goodbye television, telephone, and video games!

Finally, the destination I'd been waiting for! We unloaded the fishing poles, life jackets, waterproof bags, food, and tackle; then we headed to the owner's office to purchase our five-day permit. By now the sun was setting on the horizon and the cry of loons told me it would soon be too dark to catch anything but black fly and mosquito bites. I took one last look at the

lake and mentally challenged the elements to defy the master angler abilities I had acquired in my seventeen years. Walleye and northern pike beware! I climbed the wooden-plank stairs to the cabin, shook the sand off of my shoes, and declined the offer to sit up and talk for the next several hours. I wanted to get to bed and get to tomorrow. In the morning I would head out to a hidden lake found only by driving for an hour and a half on a logging road and begin my reason for enduring the long drive from Nebraska: fishing in the cold, clear waters of Canada.

## **Grade 8 Informational**

### **The Things People Put on Their Feet**

Shoes---we wear them nearly every day. We walk, run, jump, climb, and stand in them for hours on end. Yet we hardly think about them because they are such an ordinary part of our daily lives.

Shoes were not always an important part of people's wardrobes. The ancient Greeks, Egyptians, and Persians made and wore sandals but went barefoot most of the time. These people lived in regions where the weather was temperate, and shoes were not needed to keep their feet warm. Archaeologists have found shoes in the ruins of these civilizations, but they seem to have been worn mainly by royalty, who could afford to employ tailors and shoemakers.

#### **Sandals Were In**

As shoes became more common in ancient Egypt, the first ones were simple sandals that were created mainly to protect the soles of the feet from rough surfaces. The easiest way to make shoes in these ancient times was to use materials that were handy. These included tree bark, leaves, and grasses. In ancient Egypt, sandals were made of rushes, grassy plants with hollow stalks. To this day, rushes are used to make chair bottoms, mats, and baskets.

Among the ancient Greeks, sandals were woven of similar plant materials, but the Greeks also made sandals by tying small pieces of wood together with dried grass. In later years, they made sandals with leather from the hides of animals. The first shoes were purely functional, but over time most shoes were dyed and decorated to make fashion statements. Women began to wear soft, enclosed leather shoes, and these grew increasingly fancy in the later years of the Greek civilization.

The Romans wore sandals much like the Greeks did but used more pieces of leather to make them. Some Roman sandals had straps that wrapped around the ankles. Shoemakers often dyed these sandals in bright colors that represented the different jobs held by the people wearing them. The patricians, or privileged classes, wore red sandals with moon-shaped ornaments on the back. Senators wore brown shoes with four black leather straps wound around the lower leg. Consuls, or legal officers, wore white shoes, and soldiers wore heavy leather sandals that were more like boots---but with bare toes!

Meanwhile, people who lived in cold northern climates were making their shoes from the hides of furry animals, such as polar bears and yaks. The soles and tops of these shoes were made from pieces of soft leather sewn together. This type of shoe---whether or not it used fur---was called a moccasin. Some Native American groups made and wore moccasins for thousands of years. Some moccasins were plain, and others were adorned with beadwork.

#### **The Shoemaking Process**

As the centuries passed, the primary material for shoes continued to be leather, and the process of making shoes did not change much. A wood and metal framework called a "last" was wrapped with pieces of leather that were then sewn together. As late as the mid-1800s, lasts were straight on both sides; this meant that there was no difference in shape between left and right shoes. It also meant that shoes were uncomfortable and that breaking them in was not easy. The lasts were made in different sizes, but for a long time only two widths were available—thin and stout.

For centuries, shoes were sewn by hand, just as they had been by the ancient Egyptians. Machines to assist shoemakers were not used until the rolling machine was invented in 1845. This device was used to pound pieces of leather into thin strips. About the same time, Elias Howe invented the sewing machine, and pieces of shoe leather could now be sewn together more quickly. Another inventor, Lyman Reed Blake, created a machine for sewing the soles of shoes to the upper parts. Because shoes could be made faster and more cheaply, people who had never owned shoes before could now afford to buy and wear them. **New Trends, Materials, and Designs** In Europe and North America during the seventeenth century, most people wore boots because they were practical. Even in many large cities, dirt roads were common, and people had to walk along muddy pathways and across streams. By the eighteenth century, however, more city streets were paved with cobblestones, and it was easier to keep shoes clean. Shoes became more decorative, and fancy buckles of gold and silver were often used. Most shoes worn in the United States throughout the nineteenth century were patterned after European styles.

The major change in shoes over the last century has been the use of materials other than leather. Humphrey O'Sullivan invented the first rubber heel for shoes in 1898. Rubber heels were popular because they lasted much longer than heels made of leather. The use of rubber soles came next. The first rubber-soled shoes were called plimsolls, and they were manufactured in the United States in the late 1800s.

The first American nonleather shoes were invented in 1917. The upper material was made of a flexible canvas. These were the first "sneakers," a word that was used because the rubber sole made the shoe very quiet, unlike most leather shoes, which often squeaked when people walked.

Many people today choose athletic shoes for casual wear, but not until the late 1970s were shoes designed with amateur athletes in mind. Shoes made of rubber and canvas were worn by tennis, volleyball, and basketball players. By the 1980s, companies began to design athletic shoes for specific sports to help athletes perform better while protecting their feet and providing comfort.

Shoes have come a long way since the ancient Egyptians. Many more types of materials are used, and shoes have never been more comfortable or supportive for feet. Even so, it is interesting that the basic sandal, worn by people more than four thousand years ago, is still worn today and has not changed much over the years.