

The Fur Trade and the Hudson's Bay Company

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Read the information in the box below aloud with a partner. Then, using the five-step process for analyzing historical information, analyze the information in order to discuss the main ideas with the class.

*From the earliest period of the history of America, two leading objects of commercial gain, giving birth in their pursuit to wide and daring enterprise, have exerted a marked and abiding influence on the progress of discovery and civilisation in that vast continent: these are the precious metals of the south, and the rich **peltries*** of the north, While the fiery and magnificent Spaniard, inflamed with the mania of gold, was extending his discoveries and conquests over the brilliant countries of the south, scorched by the ardent sun of the tropics, the adroit and buoyant Frenchman, and the sturdy and energetic Briton were pursuing the less splendid, but hardly less lucrative traffic in furs, and amidst the giant forests and perennial snows of the north, laying the foundation, if of a less brilliant and attractive, yet of a more extensive and enduring empire.*

These two pursuits have been, in fact, everywhere the pioneers and precursors of civilisation in the New World...

The records of an enterprise marked by so many traits of adventure, privation, and dauntless energy, would doubtless possess many elements of romantic interest; but the exploits of the hardy and adventurous individuals to whom it owes its existence are unchronicled. ... Their memory has long ago passed away with the circumstances of the period and situation which produced them. To bring together what scattered notices are still accessible of the rise, progress, and present condition of this adventurous traffic, and of a state of things which is now fast disappearing, will form an interesting and instructive task, which it is our object to attempt in the following pages.

Source: This is an extract from Chambers' Repository, *The Fur Trade and the Hudson's Bay Company*, 1859, public domain.

Notes:

***Peltries** is an old word coming from the French *pelleterie*, which means the skin of a fur-bearing animal.

When you see three dots (...) in a quotation from any source, it means that a section in the original document has been skipped.