

Anticipation Guide: The Fur Trade—Key

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Statement	Background Information
The first fur traders in Canada were the French.	Although it is true that the first fur European fur traders in Canada were French, the Aboriginal people had a trading network among themselves long before the arrival of the Europeans. Copper, beads, pottery, furs, shells, and tobacco were traded across the entire continent.
The European fur trade in Canada became very important because of fashion trends in Europe.	The popularity and prestige of beaver felt hats in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a very important factor in the development of the fur trade. The supplies of beaver fur from Russia were soon depleted, and Europeans looked to North America for more furs to fill the demand. Ongoing competition between England and France for greater territorial control and wealth was also a factor in the fur trade.
Rupert's Land was the name given to the unexplored territory in western Canada.	On May 2, 1670, King Charles II of England created the Hudson's Bay Company by granting the rights to "sole trade and commerce" within the Hudson Strait to Prince Rupert and his seventeen associates, "The Company of Adventurers". The Charter also granted the Company control of all lands whose rivers and streams drained into Hudson Bay. This area, which would come to be known as Rupert's Land, included over 40% of Canada, and parts of Minnesota and North Dakota. It extended from Labrador across northern Quebec and Ontario, to south of today's Canada/U.S. border and as far west as the Canadian Rocky Mountains. Through the seventeenth and 18th centuries, much of this territory was explored and mapped by European explorers, some of whom worked for the Hudson's Bay Company. Although the HBC had control over this large territory, in practice it only maintained control over the region surrounding the Hudson's Bay, where it built most of its forts.
The Hudson's Bay Company was founded by Henry Hudson.	False. Henry Hudson was an English explorer who had discovered Hudson's Bay in 1610 in his quest for the Northwest Passage. He was set adrift in the Bay by his crew when they mutinied, and was never seen again, although the Bay was given his name. In 1670, the Company became known by this name because the route it used for the fur trade was the ocean route via Hudson's Bay to the Atlantic, rather than the overland route used by the North West Company.
The North West Company was a partnership that involved Scottish merchants and French coureurs de bois assisted by Aboriginal trappers.	This statement is true. The head office of the North West Company was in Montreal, and it was officially declared a company in 1783. It involved a partnership of nine different trading groups who wished to combat the HBC monopoly by extending the fur trade farther and farther west via the Ottawa—St. Lawrence River trade route. Unlike the HBC, who established permanent forts to which the First Peoples brought their furs, the NWC operations involved travelling by canoe, often with Aboriginal guides, directly to the fur trade areas in the wilderness. For many years, there was bitter competition between the two companies for control of the fur trade, until they merged under the HBC name in 1820.