

A real discovery

By **Karlie Kauffeld**

*Leland and Gray Union High School
Grade 12*

It looked like a lake. Just one fat, bobbing, blue lake. I'd seen them before, it wasn't too special. However, the man up front, Samuel de Champlain, he insisted that we had come across something magical. I was fairly certain it was a lake. But up front he was, "Hurrah, men!" and "We've really done it this time!" Well Sammy boy, I thought, you're off your rocker. But I was wrong. Oh so wrong...

Sam sent us out along the shore of his new lake to explore. I wasn't particularly into "exploring" this territory. I found myself weaving through a plethora of bushy pine trees, tripping over grumpy roots and being swatted in the face by leafy branches. That was our terrain; nothing new about it. We had been unraveling our men down the Saint Lawrence River for a long time, and frankly when Samuel broke the news that this was our destination, I was a bit put out. We already have lakes, Ontario for instance. Lake Ontario is swell, I took my son there once for some fishing. All of this mountainous exploration just to claim another lake. I felt Samuel had let me down.

I was kicking along the shore and watching other men from my exploration pod eagerly jog through the woods. I hung back. My son had a fine rock collection, and I sat myself down on a log and began to sift through the smoothed rocks looking for a precious stone my boy could enjoy. The sun was beginning to set over the green mountains, pointy tips of pines poking at the streaks of pink. I had to admit, it was beautiful. The surface of the lake had a typical sunset painted all over it. One toss of a rock and I cracked the image, pine trees wiggled around until finally settling again into their majestic pose. I was in deep contemplation of what it'd be like to be standing up there all day and night, watching each star climb up, and then fall back down. I had decided that it wouldn't be so bad to look down on this big old lake every day when there was a splash. I threw my eyes all over the top of that lake, desperate for a glimpse of the splash.

Nothing stirred. I figured it was one of the men, thinking it'd be funny to hop in for a swim. Samuel would hate that. But nowhere did any man resurface. No whoops or hollers came from the bordering woods.

I dropped the handful of exotic rocks I had chosen to carry home with me and got to my feet. I took a few steps towards the lake, pushing the toes of my boot dangerously close to the lapping water. Cupping my hand around my mouth I called out, "Hello!" and was answered by myself bouncing off those endless mountains. Silence fell over the world around me. I longed to hear the slurred ramblings of the other men, I could even have stood to hear one of their jokes. But I was met with nothingness all around me. And then slowly and unmistakably something rose from the water. A long green...tail?

It was a tail. It rose five feet, swayed from side to side and slapped heroically back down into the underworld. I rubbed my eyes. No. That ... was not a fish. I was frozen to the side of the lake, staring into the endless blue straining my eyes to dig deeper below the surface. However, the straining was unnecessary because up swam this creature. Slowly a teal, shiny fin cut through the water, followed by a green bulbous head. I was terrified. My fingers were wrapped around the hem of my cotton shirt, my nails starting to tear at the threads. My mouth was dry, so dry. As two sauce-pan eyes emerged from the lake I tried to swallow, but there was nothing. Water droplets peeled off the monster like a layer of skin. They rolled off the foot-long, pink tongue that dangled out of the creature's goofy grin.

He was grinning at me. As I stood trembling on the bank, this beast bobbed up and down grinning, flopping that big, hangy tongue all over the place. "No..." I whispered, and the monster cocked his head to one side like a dog who hears "Cookie." As if he feared he had upset me, he dunked his head back into the water, and popped up again a moment later shaking off water all over me. I had to laugh. Once the initial terror wore off, it became quite clear that this "monster" did not intend to hurt me.

Samuel de Champlain had not just discovered a lake, he had discovered a mysterious sea creature. After waving my hands wildly at my new friend and whispering, "Stay right here... please don't leave..." I stumbled dazedly off into the woods calling, "Champlain! Champlain... you've got to see this."

I brought all the men back to the exact spot where I found my monster. He never showed himself to my fellow explorers. They mocked me to no end, and I couldn't blame them. They'd all heard tales of Scotland's Loch Ness Monster, and thought it was rubbish. Samuel declared that the water would forever more be called, "Lake Champlain," and we packed up our things.

"Back to Canada!" He declared. "Aren't you coming?" Samuel asked me, with the residue of scorn clinging to his face. "I'll catch up." He turned and stomped away as I sunk onto the log, and stared out at Lake Champlain. "I know you're out there."

Awkward

By **Lauren Mazzotta**

*Lake Region Union High School
Grade 12*

sometimes
i am absent
in terms of emotions
devoid, you might say

it's quite an awkward predicament
falling short of simple expectations
to feel
something
anything
even a flicker
but the match must have gotten a little wet

Border crossing

By **Andrew Clark**

Dummerston School, Grade 7

I was snowboarding with my cousin at Jay Peak, and it was a perfect day for shredding some powder. We were on the grand summit lift going to the top of the mountain. When we got there we started heading down a powder run when we saw a perfect powder run to the right. It wasn't even a trail but there was at least three feet of powder. We looked around and didn't see any ski patrol so ... we went for it. We rode for about 10 minutes when we got to a drop off. It was about a 10-foot drop and it didn't seem too hard. I tried it and landed it easily. It started to snow and got harder to see. I almost ran into a tree, but I went around it. I was riding a little and got my nose stuck under a log and did a front flip down a cliff. I landed it but then hit a tree. That part wasn't fun. We started hearing people so we knew that we were getting close to a real trail. We kept riding and came out of the woods only a couple of yards away from the main lodge. In the end it was fun but risky.

Stepping over

By **Sarah Levine**

Brattleboro Union High School, Grade 9

It's funny to think how long ago we crossed that boundary. The boundary we created and the boundary we destroyed. We always debated about what to do, me on one side of the argument, you on the other.

"We can change the lines of this boundary. It's possible."

"No. Please don't ask me to do that."

But, gradually, we met somewhere in the middle; like meeting on the boundary between Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico. We had our feet in multiple states of mind

and couldn't decide which we were really in. Was it the warmth and endless questions like those of Arizona? Or was it the titanic rolling mountains, layered with secrets like those of Colorado? I can't be sure. If rules were meant to be broken, boundaries were meant to be crossed and we, together, have stepped over the line.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

**VERMONT WRITES DAY
TODAY
MAY 5, 2009**

YWP is encouraging schools to take time today to write -- for just seven minutes. We have three suggested prompts:

FARMING: Why is it important to the state of Vermont? Or what one thing could be done to save farms? Or tell a story about a farm or farmer you know.

VERMONT, 2059: Imagine your town in the year 2059. Tell a story, describe what it's like to walk downtown. What do you see?

POETRY: Share a poem.

YWP has *cash prizes* for top submissions to the **Farming** and **Vermont 2059** prompts. Students (or teachers) can submit entries at: youngwritersproject.org Or, students can post work (no log in needed) at: vermontwrites.ywpvt.net However, students MUST include their first names and last initial, grade AND the name of their school to be considered.

The cash prizes for the Farming prompt are generously donated by **St. Albans Cooperative Creamery** and **Cabot Cheese**.

The regular prompt due this week is the **Farming** prompt and those submissions will also be put in the mix for the *cash awards*! Winners will be announced and published in June, National Dairy Month.

Young Writers Project is an independent nonprofit dedicated to helping students improve their writing skills.

YWP maintains a safe student Web site — youngwritersproject.org; builds and supports *online writing classrooms* used by schools and after-school programs; trains college mentors to provide feedback; and helps teachers integrate technology in their classrooms through workshops and a growing library of best practices and ideas on ywpvt.net.

YWP appreciates the support of many foundations, individuals and businesses, including: **Physician's Computer Company**, our neighbor at Champlain Mill in Winooski.