



## Explaining the Mystery

*This MysteryQuest examines the adequacy of the “Frozen Man” theory as an explanation for the identity of Jerome, a man who was found without legs and speechless on a Nova Scotia beach in 1863. Students learn to recognize when a theory offers a sound historical explanation of an event.*

*A critical thinking challenge to accompany*

**Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History**  
**Jerome: The Mystery Man of Baie Sainte-Marie**

<http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/25/indexen.html>

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*based on an approach developed by The Critical Thinking Consortium (TC<sup>2</sup>)*  
[www.tc2.ca](http://www.tc2.ca)

**Ages**  
14–16

**Courses**  
Canadian history, social studies

**Key Topics**

- historical explanation
- theories explaining the Jerome mystery

## Critical Challenges

- Locate relevant evidence to support or contradict the “Frozen Man” theory.
- Judge whether the theory offers a believable explanation of Jerome’s identity.

## Broad Understandings

- Students will learn that reliable, relevant, and adequate evidence is key to arriving at plausible conclusions about the credibility of a historical explanation.

## Requisite Tools



### Background knowledge

- knowledge of the theories surrounding the mystery of Jerome
- knowledge of the accepted facts about Jerome



### Criteria for judgment

- criteria for a good historical explanation (e.g., consistent with the body of evidence, explains many aspects, lots of evidence, credible sources)



### Critical thinking vocabulary

- historical explanation



### Thinking strategies

- data charts



### Habits of mind

- attention to detail

## Independent Study

This lesson can be used as a self-directed activity by having students individually or in pairs work their way through the guided instructions and support material found at <http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/25/indexen.html>.

## Whole Class Activities

On the following pages are suggested modifications of the self-guided procedures found on the MysteryQuest website for use with a class of students. For convenience, each item of support material and a set of procedures are linked to the relevant suggestions for whole class instruction.

## **Suggested Activities**

### **Set the context**

- Use the synopsis of the theory [Gamby, the “Frozen Man” from Chipman](#) to play the “telephone game” with a handful of students. Whisper the brief overview of the story into one student’s ear who, in turn, whispers it to another. Invite the last person to share his/her version aloud with the class. Compare it to the version told to the first student. Discuss the differences in accounts (e.g., missing, irrelevant, additional or inaccurate information) and the reliability of second-hand accounts. How might students use this knowledge about the difficulties of second- and third-hand accounts when learning about a historical event?
- Use [Introduction](#) as a guide to explain the context in which students will investigate the “Frozen Man” theory.
- You may want to display [drawings and pictures](#) of Jerome and briefly explain the three other theories related to his identity outlined in [Theories](#).

### **Discuss the challenge**

- Divide students into groups of three. Use [The Task](#) to explain that each group will collectively analyze three documents for evidence about possible links between Gamby and Jerome. They will then assess the plausibility of the theory in light of four identified criteria.

### **Learn about the “Frozen Man”**

- Using [Step 1: Learn about the “Frozen Man”](#) as a guide, direct students to the historian’s overviews of the theory found in the Secondary Sources section of [Evidence in the Case](#). Distribute a copy of [Summarizing the Accounts](#) to each student. Either distribute a copy of the overview documents to each group or read the documents aloud to the class. Ask students to record the relevant information on their copy of the activity sheet. Arrange for groups to share their findings.

### **Gather relevant evidence**

- Use [Step 2: Examine historical documents](#) as a guide to explain that each member of the group will review one of the assigned newspaper articles.
- Distribute a copy of the three newspaper articles in [Evidence in the Case](#) to each group.
- Distribute three copies of [Summarizing the Accounts](#) to each group. Direct students to read their assigned document and record the relevant statements about Gamby and any possible consistencies or inconsistencies with details from Jerome’s life.

- Invite students to share their findings with the rest of their group.

### **Introduce the criteria for good theory**

- Use [Step 3: Consider what makes a good historical theory](#) as a guide to explain the criteria upon which students are to assess the adequacy of the “Frozen Man” theory.
- Distribute a copy of the three government documents in [Evidence in the Case](#) to each group. Direct students to look for consistencies/inconsistencies within and among these documents, the newspaper articles, and their completed activity sheets.

### **Assess the theory**

- Using [Step 4: Assess the theory](#) as a guide, explain how each group is to assess the extent to which the “Frozen Man” theory meets the criteria of a good historical explanation.
- Distribute a copy of [Assessing the Theory](#) to each group. Encourage students to consider all of the evidence gathered when rating each criterion.
- When students have completed their charts, discuss their ratings as a class.

### **Present your conclusion**

- Using [Step 5: Explain your conclusion](#) as a guide, direct students individually to offer their final conclusions about the believability of the theory.
- Distribute [Justifying My Conclusion](#) to each student.
- Invite students to share their conclusions with each other or in their groups.
- Ask students to reflect on what they learned about assessing historical explanations by completing a 3-2-1 activity:
  - three things they learned;
  - two cautions when analyzing secondary accounts or considering historical explanations;
  - one question they still have about the “Frozen Man” theory.

## **Evaluation**

- Use the rubric [Assessing the Evidence and Ratings](#) to evaluate students’ identification and rating of the evidence from the documents.
- Use the rubric [Assessing the Justification](#) to evaluate students’ reasons for and against their overall conclusion.

## **Extension**

- Invite students to work individually or as a class to pursue the suggested activities listed in [Extension](#).