

Educational Activity

***Early Cinema in Quebec***

**Guidelines**

**Silent Cinema in Quebec, 1896-1930**

[www.cinemamuetquebec.ca](http://www.cinemamuetquebec.ca)

## Early Cinema in Quebec

### OBJECTIVES

Through the use of film clips and newspaper articles from the period, introduce and educate students on the origins of cinema in Quebec (1896-1930) and the problems pioneers of this art encountered.

### DETAILS

- ❖ Length: 120 minutes.
- ❖ Materials
  - clips of early “animated views”;
  - the documentary *La conquête du grand écran* (directed by André Gladu);
  - articles from Quebec press of the period;
  - Internet resources at Radio Canada (<http://archives.radio-canada.ca> — arts and culture — 1972-Ernest Ouimet, cinema pioneer)
  - the Institut de la statistique du Québec (<http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/observatoire/default.htm>)
- ❖ Instructions: students work in groups of four.

### PREPARATION

1. Ask students what films they are currently interested in.
2. What Quebec films are they familiar with?

- ❖ Titles
- ❖ Actors
- ❖ Directors

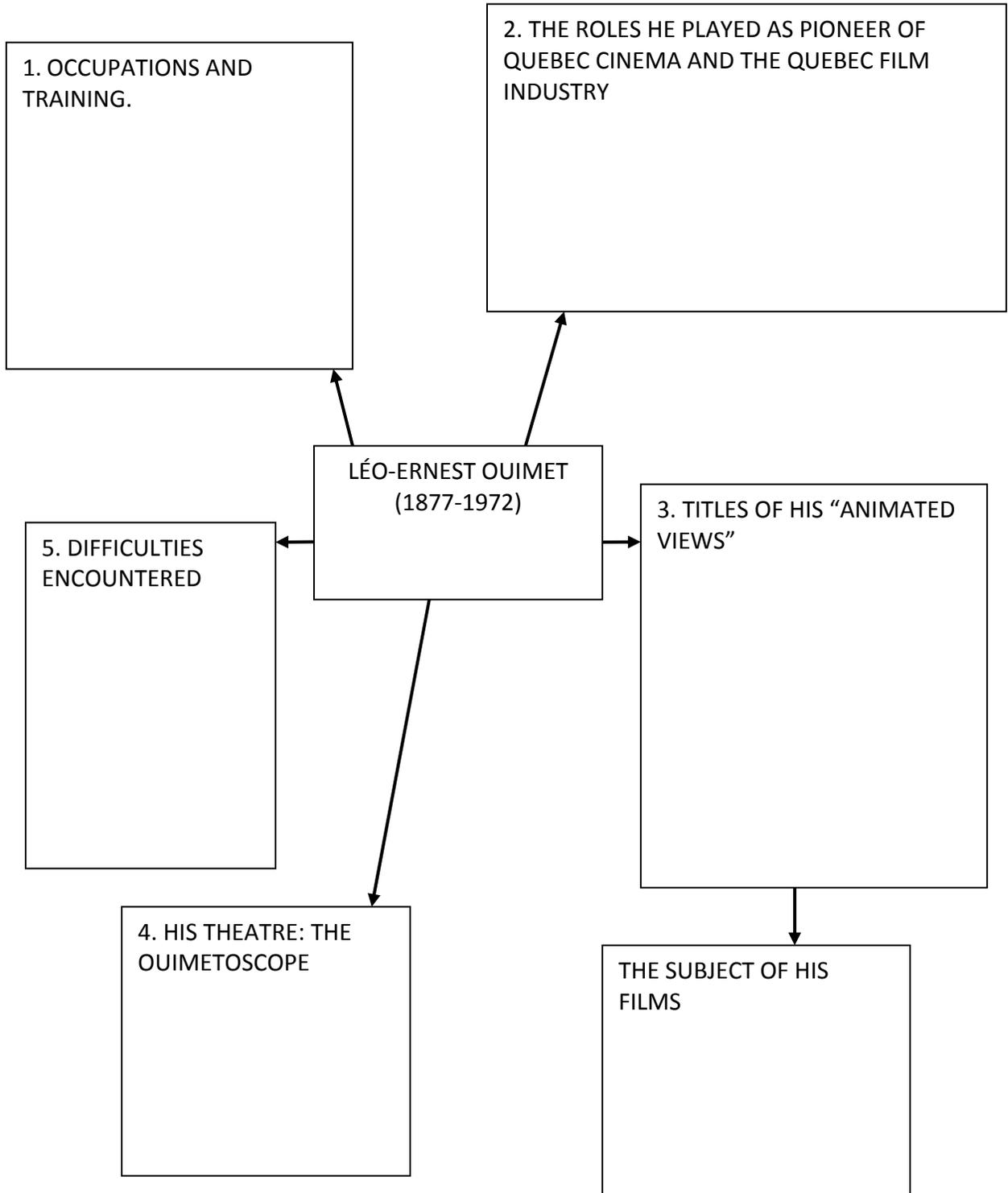
If their knowledge is limited, provide some information on the subject.

3. What is early cinema in Quebec like according to the students?
4. Show a clip from an early film.

### DISCOVER A FILM PIONEER IN QUEBEC: LÉO-ERNEST OUIMET

Complete the following chart using articles from the early Quebec press, Internet links and a 10-minute clip of *La conquête du grand écran* (a documentary by André Gladu).

**Chart**



## **ACTIVITY GUIDELINES**

**Question 1:** Students should research and list the occupations Ouimet had before becoming a film director and producer which allowed him to gain some experience in these professions.

**Question 2:** Students should research and list Ouimet’s various activities in the field of cinema. This should clearly establish that Ouimet not only directed films, but was also involved in many other film-related activities.

**Question 3:** Through the use of newspaper articles, students should identify the “animated views” Ouimet directed. This will also provide students with an opportunity to learn about the subjects and types of films early audiences were interested in, such as documentaries, fiction films and dramas.

**Question 4:** The Ouimetoscope here refers to the one Ouimet built, not the one from Salle Poiré. Students should list the following: the reason for the name, the opening date, construction cost, seating capacity, show times, admission price, noteworthy features, and kinds of shows presented.

**Question 5:** The difficulties Ouimet encountered will not only show the effects of political power, but also the important place the Catholic Church held within Quebec society at the time. Others points of interest: the tactics American companies used in attempting to establish a monopoly in the film industry and in film exhibition in Quebec.

## **GROUP REVIEW OF ANSWERS**

Check the students’ answers after they complete the chart (answers below).

**In the conclusion, bring students to reflect on the following points:**

1. The important place Ouimet occupied in the history of “animated views” in Quebec.
2. That the majority of “animated views” exhibited in Quebec were made in the United States and France. This point can be brought up during the reading of newspaper articles.
3. Early audiences were largely interested in scenes depicting everyday life, but this soon gave way to a passion for other kinds of films. French and American productions offered the most variety (dramas, historical films, fiction, etc.).

## **ANSWERS**

Question 1

- ❖ Electrician
- ❖ Camera operator for the Kinematograph Company
- ❖ Lighting engineer

Question 2

- ❖ Acquires projectors, teaches operators how to use them
- ❖ Improves his projection machine (“Ouimetoscope”, 1905)
- ❖ Film director
- ❖ Theatre owner, the Ouimetoscope
- ❖ Opens film distribution service (around 1906)
- ❖ Signs contract with Charles Pathé in France for the rights to distribute Pathé films in Quebec, the Maritime provinces (1914) and Ontario and Western Canada (1915), thus becoming the Pathé

company's representative for all of Canada. Ouimet operated under the corporate name of Speciality Film Import

- ❖ President of the Canadian company Laval Photoplays Limited (1922)

#### Question 3

- ❖ Films: *Incendie de la rue Notre-Dame* (1906), *Raquetteurs canadiens* (1907), *Concours de sac de sel* (1907), *Fête des morts au cimetière de la Côte-des-Neiges* (1907), *Course à pied pour la fête des Rois* (1907), *Effondrement du pont de Québec* (1907), *Funérailles de Joseph Israël Tarte* (1907), *Mes Espérances* (1908), *Incendie à Trois-Rivières* (1908), *Régates de Sainte-Rose* (1908), *Réceptions civiques sur la montagne* (1908), *Les pompiers de Montréal paradant sur le Champs-de-Mars* (1908), *Fête du tricentenaire de la ville de Québec* (1909), *Congrès eucharistique de Montréal* (1910), *Sir Wilfrid Laurier à l'assemblée de Laprairie* (1908), *The Call of Freedom* (1918), *Le feu qui brûle* (1918), *Sauvons nos bébés* (1918), *Why Get Married* (1923)
- ❖ Subjects: scenes of everyday life, historical documentaries, current events, dramas, documentaries, fictions

#### Question 4

- ❖ Reason for name: Ouimet's theatre
- ❖ Opening date: August 7, 1907
- ❖ Cost of construction: \$30,000
- ❖ Seating capacity: 1,200
- ❖ Show times: afternoon and evening
- ❖ Admission prices: 35 cents, 25 cents, 10 cents
- ❖ Noteworthy features: one of the first cinemas in North America built specifically for the exhibition of "animate views"; fire proof
- ❖ Types of shows: local and foreign "animated views" (American, French and British) of various genres (fantasy, historical, drama, educational, current events, comedies, etc.), singers and orchestras.

#### Question 5

- ❖ Local and foreign competition
- ❖ Closing of theatres on Sunday
- ❖ Censorship