

REVIEW OF *THE HOCKEY SWEATER CD-ROM*

CD-ROM	<i>The Hockey Sweater</i>
Platform	Windows 2000 and XP Mac OS X 10.3 or higher CD drive
Software and hardware requirements	QuickTime V.7 Designed for 1024 x 768 resolution
Publisher	3D courseware/ Les Éditions 3D http://www.editions3d.ca/hockey
Support offered	Website: http://editions3d/hockey (in English) or http://www.editions3d.ca/hockey/fr/Depannage.shtml (in French)
Target language	English
Target audience	Learners of English as a second language (intermediate to advanced level) especially Canadian English language learners
Price	\$34.95 - CD-ROM Teacher's Guide (172 pp.) - \$34.95 CD-ROM + Teacher's Guide - \$60.00 (special offer)

Review by [Lily Sorenson](#), [Georgetown University](#)

The Hockey Sweater CD-ROM is intended for young English language learners ages 11 and up and adult literacy learners whose English proficiency ranges from high beginning to advanced. The CD is meant to be used in an English language classroom or for self-study. A 172-page teacher's guide provides a transcript of the video on the CD, notes and information about each of the activities, and teaching ideas. The activities on the CD-ROM focus on the theme of hockey and the classic Canadian story *The Hockey Sweater: A Childhood Recollection* by Roch Carrier. This story, set in the winter of 1946 in a small city in Quebec, Canada, is about a young boy whose life centers around hockey. The boy and his friends idolize the Montreal Canadiens star player Maurice Richard and wear sweaters like his. One day, the young boy receives a new sweater in the mail, but it is from the Toronto Maple Leafs instead of the one he was hoping for, namely that of Maurice Richard. His mother forces him to wear the new sweater. He feels deeply embarrassed wearing the sweater when he plays hockey with his friends. He loses his temper and is sent to church to pray for forgiveness; instead, he prays for moths to eat up his new sweater. A review of *Le Chandail de Hockey* CD-ROM, the French version of *The Hockey Sweater*, was published recently (Caws, 2007) in *Language Learning & Technology*. Here, the English version of *The Hockey Sweater* is reviewed to evaluate the relevance this CD might have for teaching and learning English as a second language.

The English version of the CD-ROM, like its French counterpart, is divided into three "periods" to represent the divisions of a hockey game. There are two other sections, "Zone" and "Encounters", both of which provide expanded writing activities and opportunities to learn about the creators of the the CD-ROM and the writer of the original story, Roch Carrier. The interactive activities on the CD-ROM are geared toward three specific proficiency levels: advanced beginner, called "Peewee"; intermediate, called "Junior"; and advanced, called "Pro" (for professional), reminiscent of levels in hockey. The levels of the interactive activities are indicated with hockey sticks; one hockey stick is used for Peewee, two for Junior, and three for the Pro level. The addition of the hockey sticks makes the CD-ROM appealing to young English language learners and also provides a quick way to identify the level for which an activity is intended.

Overall, *The Hockey Sweater* provides good interactive listening, reading, vocabulary, and culture activities. Caws states that "[a]t first glance, *Le chandail de hockey* CD-ROM seems to require

a fairly good understanding of the [target] language.” At the same time, she also suggests that “because all the functions can be repeated more than once (including the exercises), and because the help functions offer both French and English explanations, *Le chandail de hockey* offers a good balance of autonomy and guided activity” (Caws, 2007, p. 36). *The Hockey Sweater* similarly fosters autonomy by allowing students to repeat activities; however, it falls a bit short in offering a good balance of guided practice. There is a lack of adequate progression and scaffolding from level to level for all activities, as described in more detail below. Xu (2004) states that an important criterion to consider when choosing ESL materials is to make sure that the materials show “evidence of a developmental progression of content” (p. 3).

The Hockey Sweater is set up in the same manner as described by Caws (2007) for the French version. Both include the same animated film *The Sweater* as well as similar activities. One difference between the English and the French versions can be found in the 2nd Period Peewee listening/reading comprehension activity: the English version contains 12 questions about the story content whereas the French version contains almost twice as many, 22 questions. Another difference surfaces in the Help Menu; Caws (2007) states that in *Le Chandail de Hockey* the Help Menu is available in both English and French. In *The Hockey Sweater*, it is available only in English.

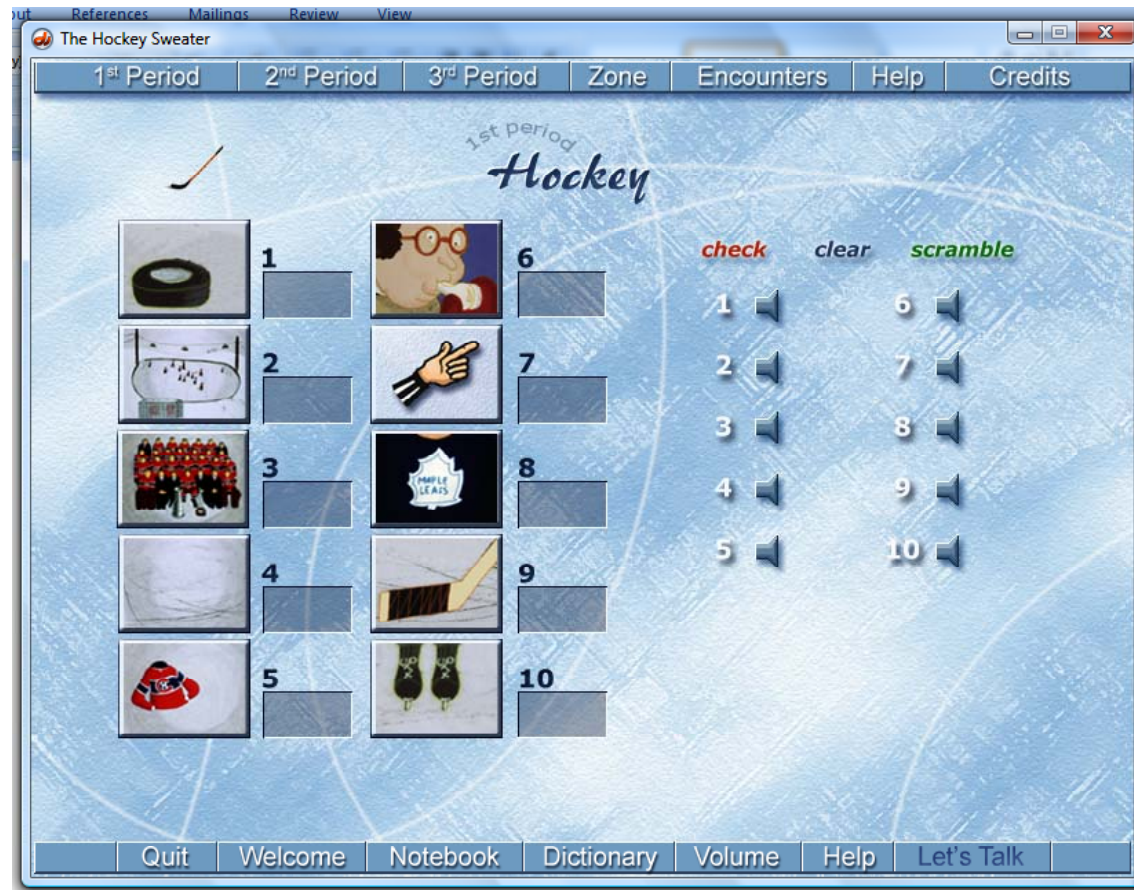


Figure 1. Sample listening and vocabulary activity.

First Period

The 1st Period in both *The Hockey Sweater* and *Le Chandail de Hockey* focuses on listening activities. In *The Hockey Sweater*, this section consists of segments labeled “The Sweater”, “Video Clips”, “Hockey”, “Oral Questions”, and “Highlights”. “The Sweater” is an animated, 10-minute video of Roch Carrier’s

classic story. It is the main feature of the entire CD-ROM in that all of the activities either use parts of the story or focus on Canadian culture or hockey with the story used as a basis for developing listening comprehension. The story on the video is narrated by Roch Carrier, who has a fairly strong French accent. A benefit of having Roch Carrier tell the story is that it makes the material on the CD quite authentic as Carrier is also the author of the story. It may be difficult for some students to understand some words due to Carrier's French accent; however, the authors of the CD-ROM have partially solved this problem in the 2nd Period in the activity "Exploring the Story," where a button labeled "Coach" allows learners to replay the video while listening to a male native speaker narrating the story. In several of the lower level listening activities, parts of the recording are Carrier telling the story; however, no "Coach" is provided. As a result, these activities may be somewhat difficult for lower level students.

The "Video Clips" section is helpful in that it provides a place where students can replay eight different segments of the video to gain a deeper understanding of the story's content. These segments summarize the main points of the story and allow students to focus on capturing parts of the story they may not have understood before going on to comprehension activities. If students forget a part of the story, they can come back to this section and repeat it.

The section entitled "Hockey" is a listening and vocabulary activity geared towards Peewee-level students. In this activity, students click on the listening icon and listen to a spoken word. All of the vocabulary is related to hockey and in fact comes from the video. Students match what they hear to the appropriate picture (Figure 1). This activity can help students learn the vocabulary items and improve their listening skills.

In the "Oral Questions" activity, students listen to twelve different questions. With each question, they also listen to and choose the correct answer about the story, spoken in standard English by a native English-speaking female voice. The activity is geared toward the Peewee level; however, the questions become progressively more difficult. Questions 1-7 are easier, and often the answer can be found in the picture on the screen, but the answers may not necessarily be related to hockey or to the story. For example, Question 7 asks, "What is that blue figure on the table?" The answer is "a cookie jar," which is not mentioned at all in the story. The Teacher's Guide suggests that Questions 8-12 may be too challenging for the Peewee level but could be more appropriate for the Junior level (The National Film Board of Canada, 2007). Indeed, questions 8-12 are more difficult, but the answers can be found in the story. For example, Question 11 asks, "Why does Roch get a penalty?" The answer, "There are too many players on the ice," is provided in the story as "He gave me a penalty because there were already five players on the ice." For this reason, question 11 may in fact be easier for students to answer than question 7.

The "Highlights" section is geared toward the Junior level. In this activity, students listen to short parts of the video and match these to appropriate pictures. For example, in one listening segment, students hear, "That was too much! It was too unfair! 'This is persecution! It's just because of my blue sweater!'" The student has to match these words to the picture of a yelling boy (Figure 2). Some of these sentences have more to do with remembering the order of events in the story than creating a match between what students hear and what they see. These short listening segments are parts of the video narrated by Roch Carrier, so, due to his French accent, they may be a little difficult for some students to understand as no "Coach" is provided.



Figure 2. Sample activity with listening highlights of the video.

Second Period

The 2nd Period of *The Hockey Sweater* consists of reading and listening activities for each of the different levels. The first activity, entitled “Exploring the Story”, is not marked for any level. As Roch Carrier tells the story *The Hockey Sweater: A Childhood Recollection*, a video labeled *The Hockey Sweater* is shown on the screen. The video contains pictures that correspond with the story. While listening to the story the text can be followed along on the left side of the screen. This allows students to build sound-word relationships and provides input in English, both visually and auditorily. In addition, short paragraphs about 18 different Canadian culture topics related to the story can be accessed on the right. Some of the cultural topics include the Montreal Canadiens, Hockey Night in Canada, the Ancient Craft of Recycling, the Skating Rink, Anatomy of a Wood Stove, and the Rocking Chair. Students can choose to make this information visible or hide it if it is distracting. In this activity, students can also fast forward or rewind the video. If they want to focus on reading the short cultural paragraphs on the right, it is necessary to pause the video, read the paragraph, and then fast-forward the video to the next cultural topic. It is helpful for students to see how these cultural topics relate to and provide background to the story, but it would also have been helpful for students and teachers if these cultural paragraphs could have been viewed separately. This would have allowed them to read and discuss these cultural topics in more depth and in any order. More information about many of these topics is located in the “Heritage” and “Hockey” sections in the 3rd Period; however, the information in the 3rd Period is much longer and would be harder for a lower level student to understand.

In addition, several different types of listening and reading activities are available in the 2nd Period. First, the CD offers interactive vocabulary exercises. At the Peewee level, these include hockey-related vocabulary and clothing, such as *skates*, *ice*, *hockey stick*, *cap*, *coat*, and *tie*. In these activities, students

drag and drop words to match with pictures. At the Junior level, the words relate to hockey and home, such as *gloves, team, referee, sink, tablecloth, rug, and chest of drawers*. Finally, at the Pro level, the vocabulary is related to hockey and clothing, such as the names of famous Canadian hockey players, in addition to *plaid skirt, pleated skirt, felt hat, and overalls*. In the vocabulary activities at the Junior and Pro levels, students match words to definitions instead of pictures. Overall, the words seem to have been selected randomly. While many are related to hockey, or an item or event from the story, many words, such as *jar* and *tablecloth* at the Junior level, are not mentioned in the story. In addition, consistent progression from level to level is missing. For example, nine of the ten hockey-related words for the Peewee and Junior levels are the same. At the Pro level, the hockey vocabulary activity requires students to know about specific famous Canadian hockey players, such as Abby Hoffman and Frank Boucher, about whom students read in the 3rd Period. This task is more a comprehension than a vocabulary activity. The majority of English language learners are likely to be familiar with neither hockey nor the players, so this activity is difficult to perform without reading about these players first. The instructions in the Help Menu tell students that the answers to the vocabulary questions for the Pro level can be found in the 3rd Period, but the Help Menu does not instruct students to read about the players in the 3rd Period before doing this activity. It would have been better to include the Pro level vocabulary activity in the 3rd Period instead of in the 2nd Period.

The second type of interactive activity included in the 2nd Period is a listening/reading comprehension activity. In this activity, students can read and/or listen to questions about the story spoken in standard English. Students choose the appropriate answer by clicking on one of four answer choices and are given feedback about why their choice is correct or not. Overall, there are twelve comprehension questions for each level, and the questions progress in difficulty from level to level.

The third kind of listening and reading activity available in the 2nd Period is cloze dictation, in which students listen to a short passage from the story and type in missing words on the screen. The Junior level includes two additional cloze activities: one is based on a poem located in the cultural section of the CD, and the other focuses on grammar in which students can choose to practice filling in either verbs, nouns, pronouns, prepositions, adjectives, adverbs, or conjunctions in a passage from the story. However, the words that students are required to supply and the passages that are chosen for the different levels do not seem to progress in difficulty from level to level. For example, at the Junior level, *punishment* is one of the words needed in the cloze activity, and the much more basic *write* is one at the Pro level. Both the spelling and meaning of *punishment* are more complex than those of *write*. One difference between levels is that the number of cloze blanks increases, albeit inconsistently: the longest passages can, interestingly, be found at the Junior level, not, as might be expected, at the Pro level. Another difference between the levels is that, at both the Peewee and Junior levels, students have the option of hearing the missing words in isolation, but this option is not available at the Pro level. Overall, the Junior level offers the most cloze activity choices as well as the most challenging ones. This may require teachers to provide students at the Junior level with additional support on those activities that are more challenging. Teachers may also need to create additional appropriate activities for the Peewee and Pro levels.

The final type of listening and reading activities included in the 2nd Period consists of two plot puzzles for each proficiency level. These puzzles invite students to listen again to the same short passages of the story that were used in the cloze activities, as well as an additional passage from the story. Students arrange sentences and phrases from the listening passages in the correct sequence, thus demonstrating comprehension. The difference between proficiency levels is that, at the Peewee level (Figure 3), students arrange words and short phrases in sequential order whereas at the Junior and Pro levels there is no focus on words, but only on phrases. However, again there is no clear progression in difficulty from the Junior level to the Pro level.



Figure 3. Sample Peewee level plot puzzle.

Third Period

The 3rd Period on the CD-ROM contains information about Canadian culture and the sport of hockey. The first section, labeled simply “Hockey,” includes fourteen reading passages related to hockey. These passages, written by the authors of the CD-ROM, require students to have a fairly good understanding of English because of the advanced vocabulary that is used. Most of the passages take up about one to two pages on the screen. While the texts are not accompanied by comprehension questions, the Teacher’s Guide does provide a few suggestions for accompanying activities that can be done in the classroom. For example, one of the passages, “Forever Rivals,” provides information about the rivalry between the Montreal Canadiens and the Toronto Maple Leafs. The Teacher’s Guide gives the following suggestions:

ESL learners are usually not familiar with the history of Canada and not aware of the roots of the rivalry between English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians. This essential background knowledge is outside of the scope of the CD and has to be introduced in ways appropriate to the learners.

In every country there are rivalries between groups of different backgrounds, and ESL learners can be engaged in discussions by sharing their knowledge about rivalries in their own countries (The National Film Board of Canada, 2007, p. 71).

The activities in the “Hockey” section are not specified for any particular level, but the passages provide information about hockey that might help students understand the story of *The Hockey Sweater* better. For example, there is a brief history of hockey, information about rule development, the hockey hall of fame, and the Toronto Maple Leafs.

The next section includes two short activities related to *The Hockey Song*, which was judged to be the song that “best capture[s] the spirit of hockey” (The National Film Board of Canada, 2007, p. 82). This song would probably be very familiar to Canadians but unfamiliar to ESL students. The first activity allows students to read the words to the song as they listen to it; the tune is catchy and students could enjoy learning the words as well as more about hockey. The other activity is a cloze dictation for the Junior level using words that occurred in the song. However, neither activity stresses comprehension of the song, only recognition and memorization of vocabulary items.

The third section available in the 3rd Period is entitled “The Stars”. This section includes biographies, about three or four paragraphs in length, of 31 famous Canadian hockey players, mostly from the past, and a hockey card (or trading card) for each. A link to brief recorded, although inauthentic, fan comments gives students opportunities for more listening practice. However, some of the vocabulary, including adjectives and idioms in these comments, would require teacher explanations for most ESL learners. For example, fan comments include “Howe is a timeless, goal-scoring machine” and “He was a shooter’s worst nightmare!” A “Who Am I?” quiz about the 31 hockey players can be accessed at any time by clicking on the “Who Am I?” icon at the bottom of the page. The quiz could be a useful comprehension activity after students have read the information about the individual players; nevertheless, some students may not find this activity interesting unless they are hockey fans.

The fourth section in the 3rd Period is “Eaton’s Catalogue,” an interactive activity which uses some of the actual pages from the department store Eaton’s Fall-Winter 1946-47 mail-order Catalogue and which allows students to browse the catalogue and search for different items. This section of the CD-ROM includes two different types of interactive activities. The first one is a reading activity of the Top Ten Uses of the Catalogue. Students can learn about how people used the catalogue in 1946-47. Students may find the Top Ten Uses interesting because people do not use catalogues in the same way today. For example, the number 10 use claims that the catalogue was used to decorate the walls of outhouses and also as toilet paper, which students may find unbelievable. Due to the high level of vocabulary needed for comprehension, such as *outhouse*, *strap*, *paper dolls*, *scrapbooks*, and *homesteaders*, this section of the CD would be most appropriate for advanced-level students. The second interactive activity includes an Eaton’s Catalogue order form, which students can use for simulated catalogue ordering. Three different order requests are presented for each level; these differ in the amount and type of detail that students have to find in the catalogue and keep track of. For example, at the Peewee level students are asked to order the most expensive sweater, whereas at the Pro level they are asked to order the most expensive item in the catalogue. This activity requires students to practice the skills of skimming and scanning. A teacher will have to check this assignment to see if students filled out their order forms correctly as no feedback is provided by the computer, perhaps a minor shortcoming. Two links connect Eaton’s Catalogue to the clothing vocabulary activities in the 2nd Period. Potentially well intended, these links are, however, a little confusing because they seem to take students to new activities when in fact they are just links to what students have already completed.

The last section in the 3rd Period is entitled “Heritage”. It includes nine readings (seven of which were written by the authors of the CD-ROM) about different aspects of Canadian culture and is similar to the first section, “Hockey.” Just like the Hockey texts, these passages require students to have a fairly extensive English vocabulary. While they do not include comprehension activities, they do provide helpful and interesting cultural information about Canada that could help students understand the background and context for *The Hockey Sweater*. A good time for teachers to include these reading passages in classroom discussion would be while students are discussing the cultural notes from the “Explore the Story” activity in the 2nd Period.

Overtime

Further interactive activities on the CD-ROM are located under the heading “Zone,” which includes one new section, “Dream Team,” as well as a link to the Eaton’s Order Form activity in the 3rd Period. The “Dream Team” activity allows students to choose six of the different players they have read about in the the “Stars” section in the 3rd Period and write, by typing into a window, why they would want to have these players on the same imaginary team. Writing guidance will need to be provided by the teacher. This activity might be difficult for the Peewee and Junior levels and might in fact fit better in the “Stars” activity than here by itself. Additionally, the “Zone” includes a link to Eaton’s Order Form; this also seems to be randomly placed since students are likely to have completed the order form activity in the 3rd Period.

Finally, “Encounter” provides an opportunity for students to listen to an interview with Roch Carrier, the author of *The Hockey Sweater*; to read about him; to view an art gallery of pictures by Marcel Dargis, who created the pictures for the animated video; and to learn more about several of the other artists who helped with the creation of the CD-ROM. The interviews could be used for more listening practice, but they are not accompanied by any activities; thus, a teacher would have to create activities for the students and decide upon areas of focus. Students can choose to read the transcript of the interviews while listening to them; however, at times, the video of the interviews is confusing because the interviewer’s question, while written in the transcript, is absent in the video. The “Encounter” videos will, therefore, be most appropriate for higher level learners who want more listening practice.

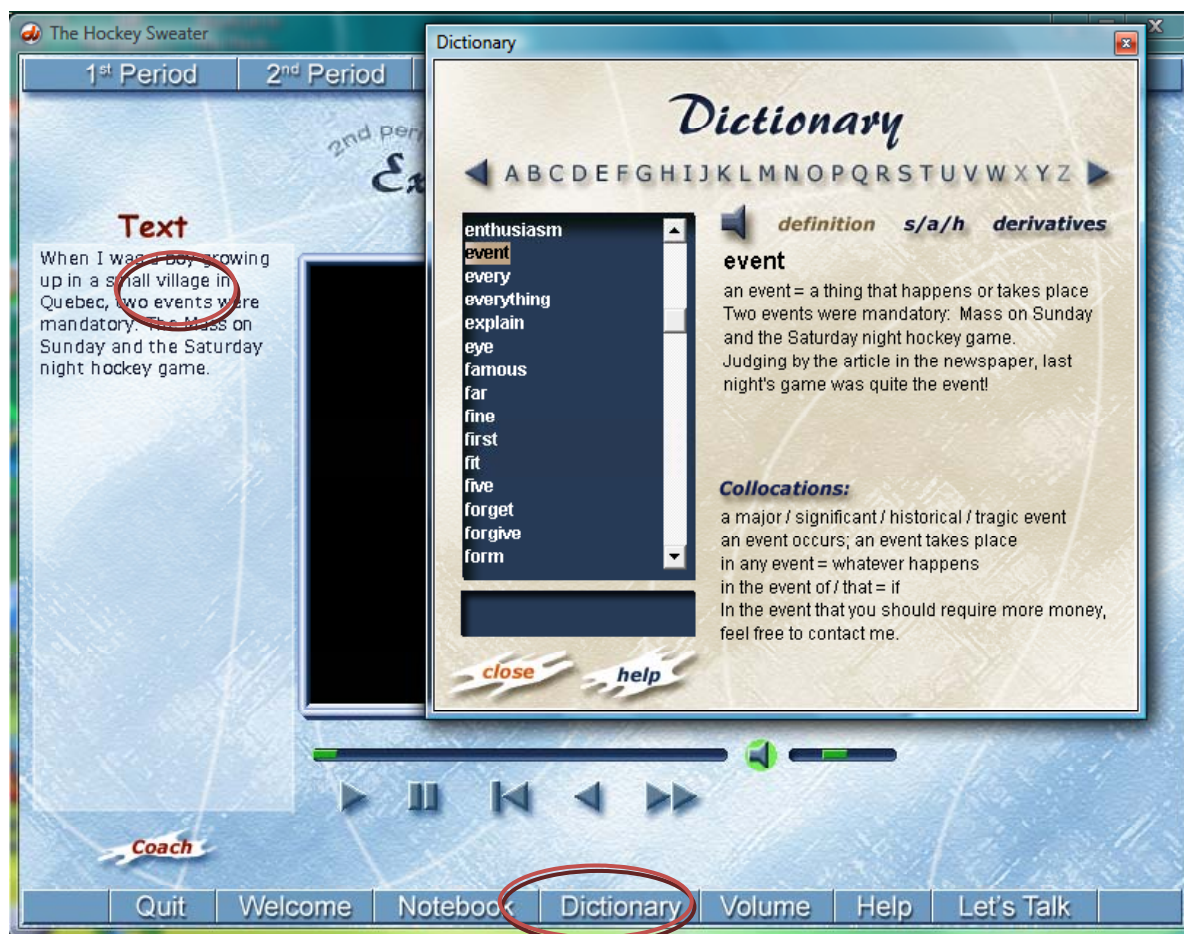


Figure 4. Sample screen of the Dictionary feature.

In addition to the activities, the CD-ROM offers two other helpful features: a “Notebook” and a “Dictionary”. The Notebook consists of a pop-up screen that allows students to take notes electronically on the screen by typing directly into the pop-up window. Students can save their notes and print them out later. However, as Caw (2007) mentions in her review of *Le Chandail de Hockey*, it would be better if the *File* function keys (new, open, print, close, save, delete) were “more accessible as buttons either at the top or bottom of the notebook because at present they are hidden behind the notebook” (p. 35). The Dictionary allows students to look up any word from the story, but it does not contain all of the words used in other texts or activities on the CD-ROM, such as the vocabulary activities, cultural sections, or the hockey cards. This may prevent students, especially those at lower proficiency levels, from understanding the reading passages presented on the CD-ROM. Students can, however, look up words from the story either by clicking on the individual words in the transcript of the story (located in “Exploring the Story” in the 2nd Period) or by clicking on the link to the Dictionary, which can be found easily at the bottom of the main interface (Figure 4).

Wrapping Things Up

Overall, *The Hockey Sweater* CD-ROM has a number of positive features. One of the greatest benefits is that it is based on a classic story. Authentic materials provide high interest and create natural opportunities for cultural awareness. Spelleri (2002) states that ESL learners benefit from the use of authentic materials because they provide opportunities for the learners to connect what they are learning to real life situations. In *The Hockey Sweater*, the authors achieve this goal by having students make connections between the story and their everyday lives. One area which students may, nevertheless, find difficult in English as a Second Language classes is the fact that the story is read by the author, Roch Carrier, in his fairly strong French accent; however, in the 2nd Period teachers can guide students to listen to the story being retold by a native English speaker, or, alternatively, a teacher might begin with this standard version *before* they have students listen to Roch Carrier’s rendition.

The CD-ROM could be very beneficial for English language learners interested in Canadian culture. Dominey (2006) states that, “the language we speak is directly related to the culture the language lives in” (para. 1). With increasing numbers of non-English speaking people immigrating to Canada (Canada Immigrant Job Issues, 2008), the need for the teaching of English as a second language has increased since English is one of the official languages of Canada. This CD-ROM could be quite useful in teaching this group of students.

Another plus of *The Hockey Sweater* is that its interface makes it very easy to navigate from activity to activity. Many of the activities are fairly easy to figure out for someone who has used computer software before, but it would have been helpful if there were instructions on the screen/pages. Learners on their own can get help by clicking on the Help button. Those at low levels of proficiency or with little computer experience may initially need additional assistance from the teacher to understand how to complete the activities.

The shortcomings of the CD-ROM have been mentioned throughout the review and can be summarized as follows: a lack of adequate progression in activities from level to level and of appropriate accompanying activities for the reading passages. For students to get the full benefit of this CD-ROM at all levels, the teacher will need to create comprehension support for the reading passages in the 3rd Period for lower level students through appropriate activities. Teachers also need to fill in the gaps where there is a lack of scaffolding or progression of difficulty from one level to the next. All in all, however, many activities on *The Hockey Sweater CD-ROM* could be very beneficial to students learning English and specifically those with an interest in hockey and Canadian culture.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Lily Sorenson is currently an instructor of English as a Foreign Language at Georgetown University. She has taught English as a second language at a number of universities, including Harvard, Northeastern, Boston, and Brigham Young. In addition to being a teacher, she was the Assistant Director of International Academic Programs at Northeastern University. She is interested in curriculum/program development and the use of technology in the classroom. She is currently pursuing a Doctoral Degree for Special Education-Bilingual Education at The George Washington University.

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