

The Hockey Sweater

"... a classic."
- The New York Times

"The best Canadian short story ever written."
- The Globe and Mail

In long-ago St. Justine, Quebec, all the boys in the village want to play hockey like their hero Maurice "The Rocket" Richard. In fact, all the boys want to be Maurice Richard. Each of them proudly sports the red, white, and blue hockey sweater of the Montreal Canadiens, emblazoned with The Rocket's famous number 9.

When young Roch's sweater becomes too small and too shabby to wear, his mother orders him a new one from the catalogue of the Eaton company in Montreal. The new sweater finally arrives - it is a disaster! Instead of a Montreal Canadian sweater, the Eaton company has sent - horrors! - a sweater of the despised Toronto Maple Leafs. Roch's mother forces him to wear it; surely Monsieur Eaton will be offended if he refuses to do so. Besides, it fit.

Roch Carrier's classic of Canadian literature delights children of all ages, whether or not they have ever played hockey. The book is based on an original short story that became an animated short film. Sheldon Cohen won the British Academy Award and many other international film honors for his animated film *The Sweater*.

ROCH CARRIER is one of Canada's best-known authors, with more than thirty books to his credit. He was the first writer to head the Canada Council, the country's major arts funding agency.

Animator **SHELDON COHEN** adapted his exuberant art from the film *The Sweater*. He has also illustrated *The Boxing Champion*, *The Longest Home Run*, and *The Basketball Player*, all written by Roch Carrier.

Award-winning translator **SHEILA FISCHMAN** translated both the story and the film text from the original French into English.

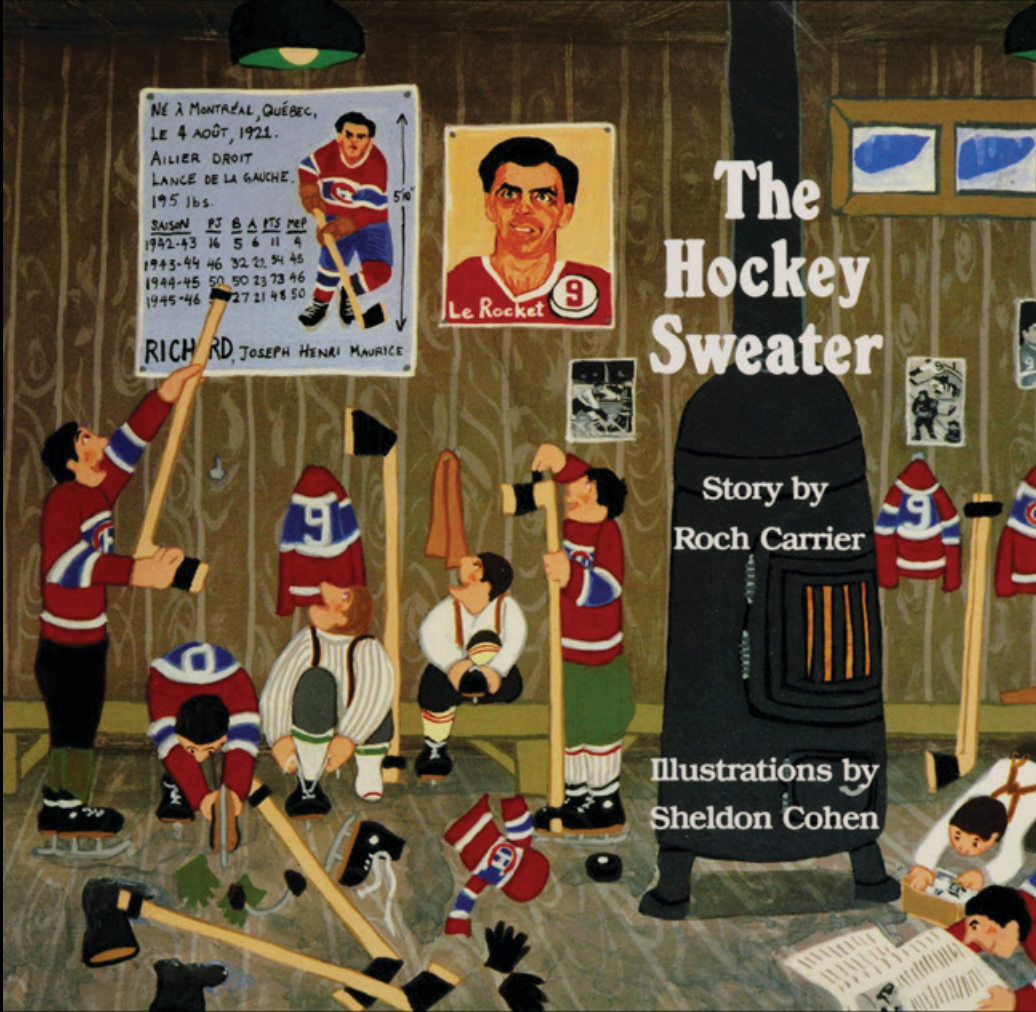


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The Hockey Sweater

Story by
Roch Carrier

Illustrations by
Sheldon Cohen

I wish to dedicate this story to all girls and boys
because all of them are champions.

Roch Carrier

The illustrator wishes to dedicate his work in this book to his wife, Donna.

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© 1979, Sheila Fischman; translation
© 1984, Sheldon Cohen; illustrations

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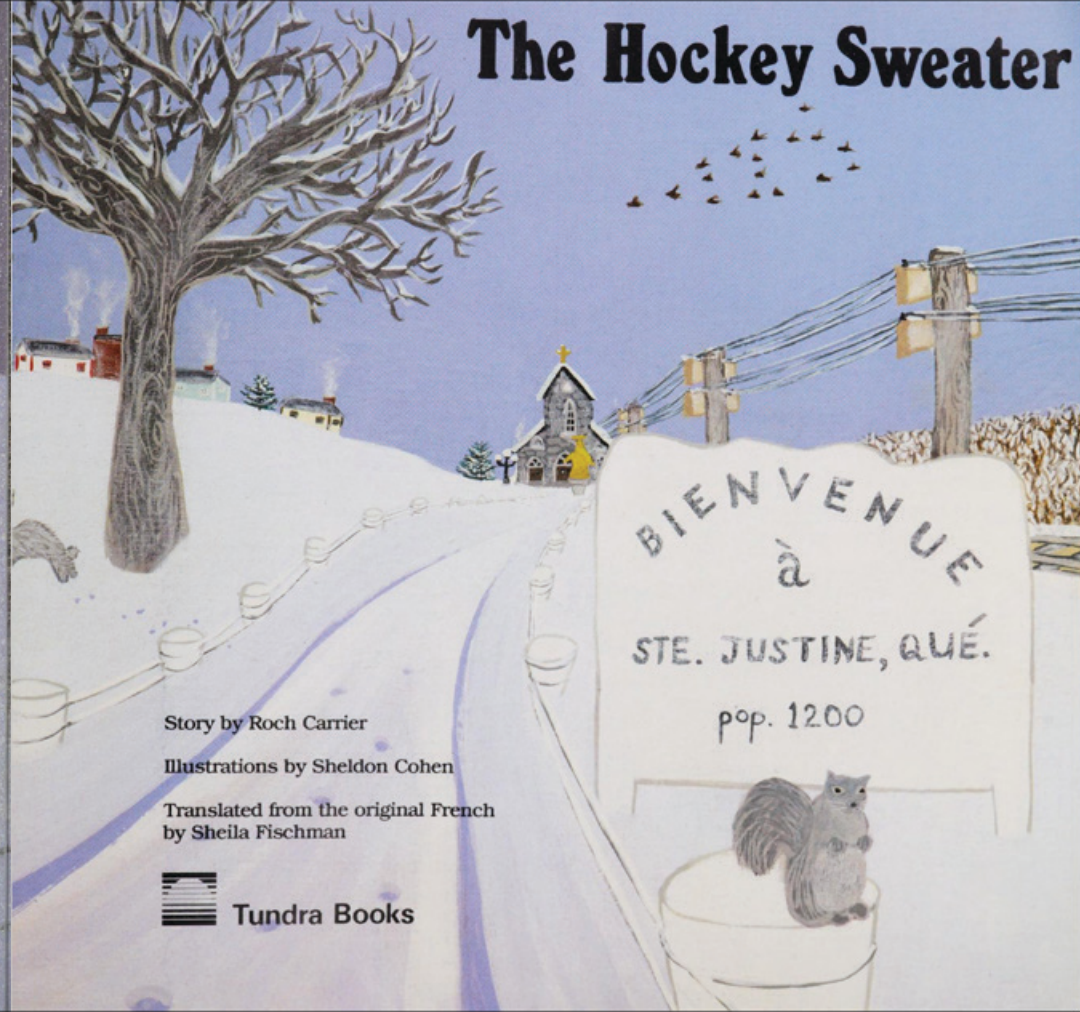
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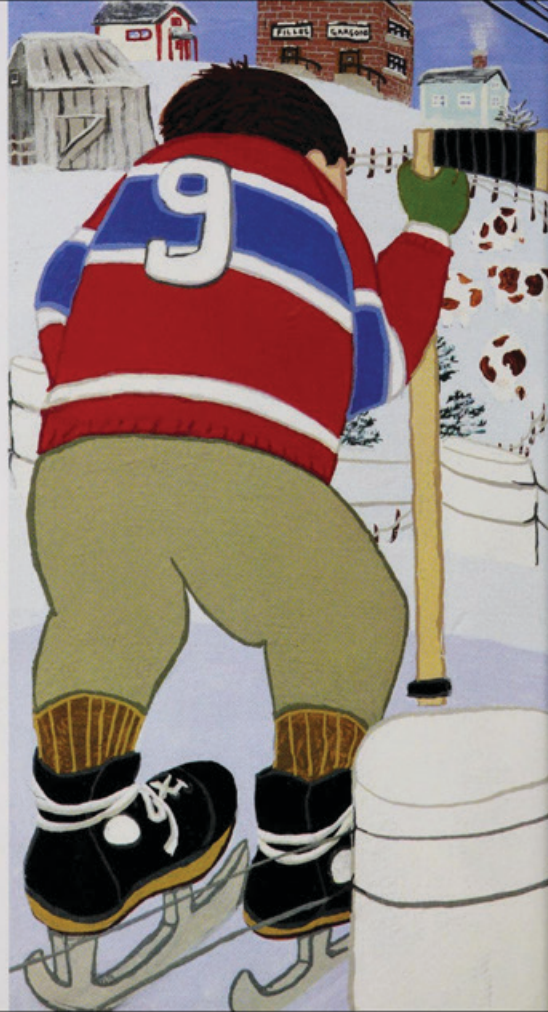


Tundra Books

The winters of my childhood were long, long seasons. We lived in three places - the school, the church and the skating-rink - but our real life was on the skating-rink. Real battles were won on the skating-rink. Real strength appeared on the skating-rink. The real leaders showed themselves on the skating-rink.

School was a sort of punishment. Parents always want to punish their children and school is their most natural way of punishing us. However, school was also a quiet place where we could prepare for the next hockey game, lay out our next strategies.

As for church, we found there the tranquillity of God: there we forgot school and dreamed about the next hockey game. Through our daydreams it might happen that we would recite a prayer: we would ask God to help us play as well as Maurice Richard.



I remember very well the winter of 1946. We all wore the same uniform as Maurice Richard, the red, white and blue uniform of the Montreal Canadiens, the best hockey team in the world. We all combed our hair like Maurice Richard, and to keep it in place we used a kind of glue – a great deal of glue. We laced our skates like Maurice Richard, we taped our sticks like Maurice Richard. We cut his pictures out of all the newspapers. Truly, we knew everything there was to know about him.

On the ice, when the referee blew his whistle the two teams would rush at the puck; we were five Maurice Richards against five other Maurice Richards, throwing themselves on the puck. We were ten players all wearing the uniform of the Montreal Canadiens, all with the same burning enthusiasm. We all wore the famous number 9 on our backs.

How could we forget that!



One day, my Montreal Canadiens sweater was too small for me; and it was ripped in several places. My mother said: "If you wear that old sweater, people are going to think we are poor!"

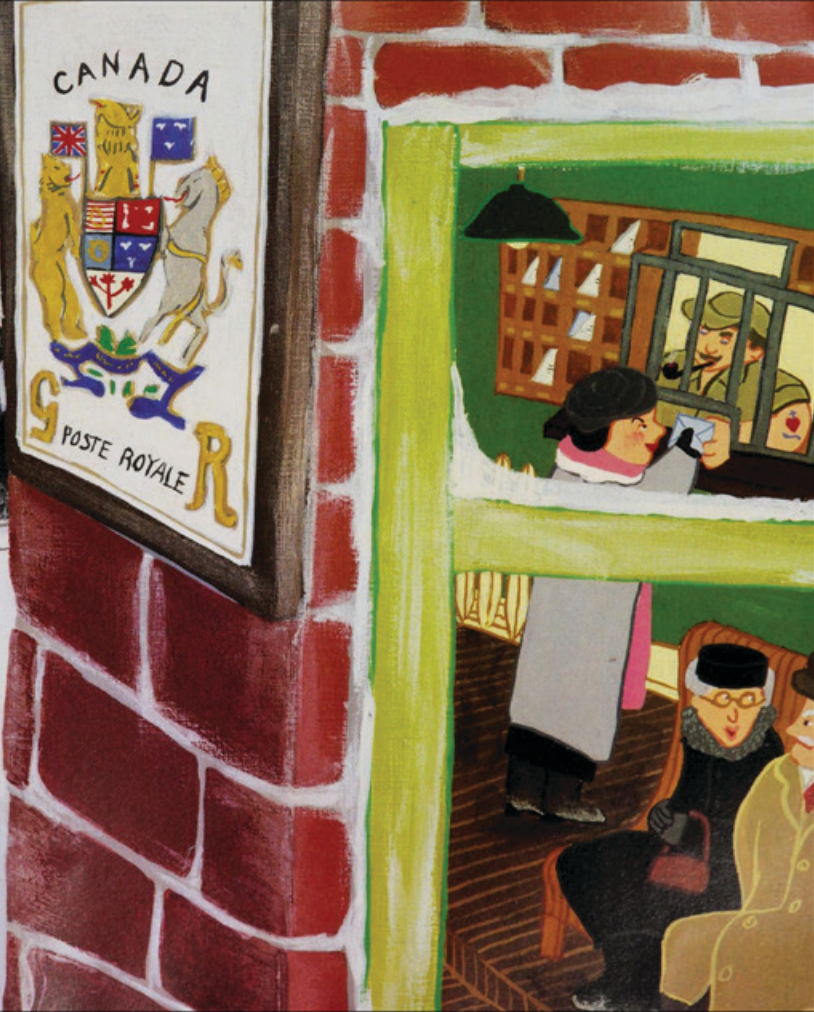
Then she did what she did whenever we needed new clothes. She started to look through the catalogue that the Eaton company in Montreal sent us in the mail every year. My mother was proud. She never wanted to buy our clothes at the general store. The only clothes that were good enough for us were the latest styles from Eaton's catalogue. My mother did not like the order forms included in the catalogue. They were written in English and she did not understand a single word of it. To order my hockey sweater, she did what she always did. She took out her writing pad and wrote in her fine schoolteacher's hand: "Dear Monsieur Eaton, Would you be so kind as to send me a Canadiens' hockey sweater for my son, Roch, who is ten years old and a little bit tall for his age? Docteur Robitaille thinks he is a little too thin. I am sending you three dollars. Please send me the change if there is any. I hope your packing will be better than it was last time."

Monsieur Eaton answered my mother's letter promptly. Two weeks later we received the sweater.



LA Choudronnière

CASSE - CROÛTE



That day I had one of the greatest disappointments of my life! Instead of the red, white and blue Montreal Canadiens sweater, Monsieur Eaton had sent the blue and white sweater of the Toronto Maple Leafs. I had always worn the red, white and blue sweater of the Montreal Canadiens. All my friends wore the red, white and blue sweater. Never had anyone in my village worn the Toronto sweater. Besides, the Toronto team was always being beaten by the Canadiens.

With tears in my eyes, I found the strength to say: "I'll never wear that uniform."

"My boy," said my mother, "first you're going to try it on! If you make up your mind about something before you try it, you won't go very far in this life."

My mother had pulled the blue and white Toronto Maple Leafs sweater over my head and put my arms into the sleeves. She pulled the sweater down and carefully smoothed the maple leaf right in the middle of my chest.



I was crying: "I can't wear that."

"Why not? This sweater is a perfect fit."

"Maurice Richard would never wear it."

"You're not Maurice Richard! Besides, it's not what you put on your back that matters, it's what you put inside your head."

"You'll never make me put in my head to wear a Toronto Maple Leafs sweater."

My mother sighed in despair and explained to me: "If you don't keep this sweater which fits you perfectly I'll have to write to Monsieur Eaton and explain that you don't want to wear the Toronto sweater. Monsieur Eaton understands French perfectly, but he's English and he's going to be insulted because he likes the Maple Leafs. If he's insulted, do you think he'll be in a hurry to answer us? Spring will come before you play a single game, just because you don't want to wear that nice blue sweater."

So, I had to wear the Toronto Maple Leafs sweater.



When I arrived at the skating rink in my blue sweater, all the Maurice Richards in red, white and blue came, one by one, and looked at me. The referee blew his whistle and I went to take my usual position. The coach came over and told me I would be on the second line. A few minutes later the second line was called; I jumped onto the ice. The Maple Leafs sweater weighed on my shoulders like a mountain. The captain came and told me to wait; he'd need me later, on defense.

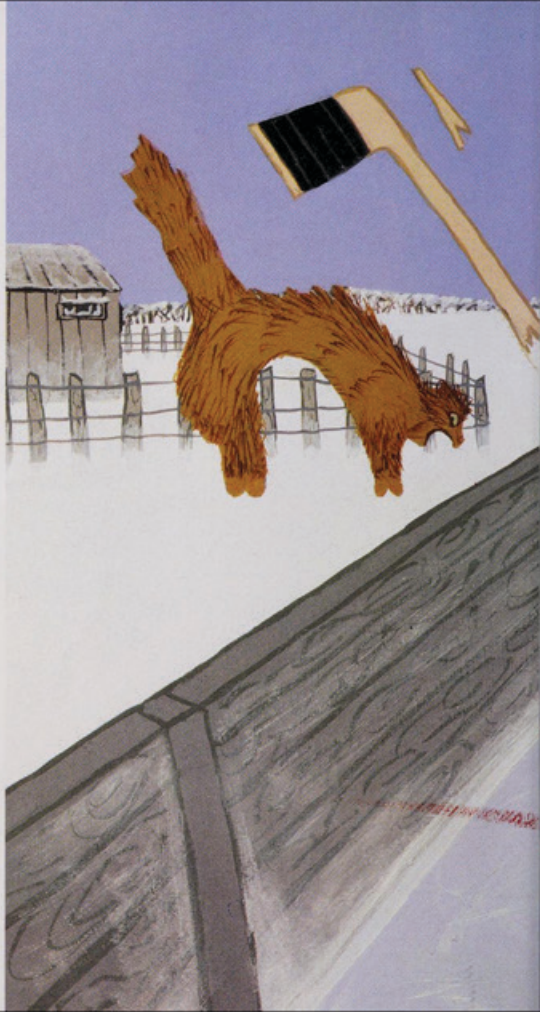


By the third period I still had not played.

Then one of the defensemen was hit on the nose with a stick and it started to bleed. I jumped onto the ice. My moment had come!

The referee blew his whistle and gave me a penalty. He said there were already five players on the ice. That was too much! It was too unfair! "This is persecution!" I shouted. "It's just because of my blue sweater!"

I crashed my stick against the ice so hard that it broke.



I bent down to pick up the pieces. When I got up, the young curate, on skates, was standing in front of me.

"My child," he said, "just because you're wearing a new Toronto Maple Leafs sweater, it doesn't mean you're going to make the laws around here. A good boy never loses his temper. Take off your skates and go to the church and ask God to forgive you."



Wearing my Maple Leafs sweater I went to the church, where I prayed to God.



I asked God to send me right away, a hundred million moths that would eat up my Toronto Maple Leafs sweater.

