

Symbols of Canada

Developed by	Elizabeth MacPherson
Suggested Length	Five 50 minute lessons
Suggested Grade Level(s)	Six
Subject Areas	Social Studies, Visual Arts Language Arts

Overview

Social studies, language arts, and art teachers can use this unit when exploring Canadian symbols and perspectives with their students. Each lesson plan allows students to investigate the link between Canadian symbols and identity, offering various perspectives of what Canada means to Canadians.

Links to Curriculum Outcomes

Students will (be expected to)

- describe how perspectives influence the ways in which experiences are interpreted (Social Studies)
- recognize and explain the interdependent nature of relationships among individuals, societies, and the environment (Social Studies)
- draw upon objects and images from their own community as a starting point for their own work (Visual Arts)
- apply critical thinking and the problem-solving strategies to reflect on and respond to their own and others' expressive works (Visual Arts)
- use writing and other ways of representing to record, develop, and reflect on ideas (Language Arts)

Links to Telling Stories: Themes / Key Words

- Sources of symbols (nature, events, people)
- Perspective

Art Work(s)

- *Untitled*, Robert Harris, CAG H-7998-3D-2
- *The Last Days of Burns*, Robert Harris, CAG H-1349
- *A Meeting of the School Trustees*, Robert Harris, <http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/>
- *In The Conway Valley*, Robert Harris, CAG H-2131
- *Church - Gaspé*, Robert Harris, CAG H-235
- *In Charlottetown, Falconwood Park*, Robert Harris, CAG H-2154
- *Holland Cove, P.E.I.*, Robert Harris, CAG H-583

- *Untitled*, Robert Harris, CAG H-1560
- *In Ch'town Poorhouse*, Robert Harris, CAG H-1679
- *Oil Study for Repainting The Fathers Of Confederation*, 1916, CAG H-1297



Lesson #1: Sketching in Nature

Objective Students will explore the natural world around them and choose an image to sketch. Note: They will need to dress appropriately for fifty minutes outdoors.

Related Art Work

- *Untitled*, Robert Harris, CAGH-7998-3D-2

Materials

- index cards
- white paper
- pencils (one with light lead, one with dark)
- eraser
- wax paper

Activities

1. As a group, have students look at Harris' sketch of trees and pressed flowers in his notebook. Students should briefly discuss:
 - how light and dark are used
 - detail
 - drawing with scribbles and smudges
2. Prepare students for fifty minutes outdoors. For safety reasons, find places outside the school where students can remain in proximity to each other. Invite students to find one object that they can sketch on an index card they have been given. Remind students to look for the little treasures in our natural world – a stone, a fallen feather, a branch, etc. When sketching, students should consider:
 - sketching details they see, rather than assumptions
 - general forms of objects
 - light and dark contrasts
3. While outside, students should choose a wildflower or a leaf to press, being sure not to collect endangered plants. Place these between two sheets of wax paper and then between the pages of a heavy book for two weeks.

4. Students create final masterpieces of their drawings, referring to the rough sketches on their index cards. Students should write their name and title on a card to place beside it, and glue their pressed vegetation beside their title.
5. The final masterpieces along with their cards can be put on display in the school – genuine symbols of students, school, nature, and Canada.

Computer Option

- Allow students to go into Ultimate Writing and Creativity or another suitable program and experiment with drawing on the computer.



Lesson #2: Who Are They?

Objective Students will study and discuss characteristics of a painting. Students will choose an individual from the artwork and represent that person with a character sketch.

Related Art Works

- *The Last Days of Burns*, Robert Harris, CAGH-1349
- *A Meeting of the School Trustees*, Robert Harris, <http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/>

Materials

- 8 x 14 paper
- pencil
- flip-chart paper
- markers

Activities

1. To introduce the lesson, form groups of six and give each group a slip of paper on which you have written one of the basic human emotions (e.g., anger, joy). Ask each group to represent their emotion using only body language and facial expression. Have the other students in the class guess which emotion is being represented.
2. As a whole group, look at the two Harris paintings and consider:
 - What is happening?
 - Who are the subjects?
 - What emotions do you see?
 - What does body language and facial expression tell us about each individual?

- How are light and dark used?
 - In *A Meeting of the School Trustees*, what might Robert Harris' name etched in the desk mean?
3. Invite students to choose an individual from the painting and create a character sketch about that person. Ask them to first draw a generic form of a person on 8 x 14 paper, and then label their sketches creatively, including, in point form, their character's:
 - name and age
 - occupation
 - thoughts
 - feelings/emotions
 - wishes
 4. Have students write a journal entry from their character's perspective. Students should write the entry to represent what happens in the painting, reinforcing their ideas with examples from the painting. The journal entries provide a glimpse into Canadian life, allowing each character to come alive as a symbol of history.

Ideas for Assessment

Collect journal entries and character sketches, and consider whether students have:

- labelled character sketches accordingly
- reinforced ideas with examples from the painting



Lesson #3: Connections to Landscape

Objective Students will compare and discuss landscape paintings, and then create one of their own using the lines on their hands as guidelines for images.

Related Art Works

- *In The Conway Valley*, Robert Harris, CAG H-2131
- *Church - Gaspé*, Robert Harris, CAG H-235
- *In Charlottetown, Falconwood Park*, Robert Harris, CAG H-2154
- *Holland Cove, P.E.I.*, Robert Harris, CAG H-583

Materials

- paper
- pencil
- tempera paint (or pastels, crayons, etc.)

Activities

1. Organize students in four groups and assign each group a painting. Invite groups to record and then share information about their paintings, considering:
 - What province does the landscape depict?
 - What natural images are present?
 - Are there visual signs of human influence?
 - How are people connected to the landscape?
2. Take five minutes to create a word web about Canadian Symbols. Encourage students to include:
 - people
 - places
 - events
 - nature
 - culture
3. Give students sheets of white paper and ask them to draw the lines that they see on the palm of one hand. Ask students to:
 - draw prominent palm lines in dark lead
 - create lines that fill the page
 - include some lines that are softer
4. Students can transform their palm sketches into landscape and paint them. Landscapes should represent their own region or another in Canada. Each landscape will be unique and offer various perspectives about Canada. Students might refer to the word web to generate ideas.
5. Hang the finished landscapes around the classroom to celebrate personal connections to Canada and the rest of the world!

Ideas for Assessment

Students might present their personal landscapes to the class and record two suggestions of positive feedback for presenters.



Lesson #4: Symbols and Storytelling

Objective Students will consider how a painting reflects history by telling a story, and investigate Canadian symbols in the artwork.

Related Art Work

- *Untitled*, Robert Harris, CAG H-1560

Materials

- pencil
- white paper
- construction paper (cut in uniform sizes)
- markers
- props found in classroom

Activities

1. As a whole group, have students view the painting and briefly discuss the scene depicted as well as Canadian symbols present.
2. Group students in fours and assign each group a character, inviting students to consider the day's events from the perspective of the character assigned to their group. The character choices are:
 - dog
 - kneeling man
 - man with rifle
 - man bent over canoe
3. Ask groups to tell a story that represents the day's events leading up to the scene in the painting, from the perspective of their assigned character. Have students create and share these stories with the class, using one of the following methods:
 - writing
 - singing
 - dramatic scene
 - artwork
 - other (group's choice)
4. Remind students to integrate Canadian symbols represented in the painting, and to use any props that are immediately accessible to them.
5. Give each student two rectangular pieces of construction paper where they might record one Canadian symbol and one thought about various perspectives that arise from the presentations (e.g., canoeing, nature, working together vs. separately). Encourage students to write ideas in one or two words. The lettering should be large so that it can be read from a distance and posted on a word wall entitled Canadian Symbols and Perspectives.

Ideas for Assessment

Invite students to create and use a peer evaluation and self-evaluation form.

Have students record in a response journal two things that they found interesting about the varying perspectives represented.



Lesson #5: Canadian Mural

Objective Students will recognize Canadian symbols in artwork and in the world, and create a mural representing those symbols.

Related Art Works

- *In Ch'town Poorhouse*, Robert Harris, CAG H-1679
- *Oil Study For Repainting The Fathers Of Confederation*, 1916, CAG H-1297

Materials

- pencil
- paper (8 x 14, and one large for mural)
- paint
- paint brushes
- sponges
- water

Activities

1. As a group, have students consider how each of the artworks is symbolic of Canadian life. Take no longer than five minutes and invite students to share with the class one symbol of Canadian life found in the artworks or another Canadian symbol of their choosing.
2. Form students in groups of five, giving each group five minutes to record symbols of Canada. Assign each group one of the following:
 - animals
 - architecture
 - people
 - landscape
 - art
 - nature
3. Groups now choose one symbol to be included in the mural and create a basic sketch of it. Gather sketches from each group and decide together on their arrangement within the mural. Consider size, for some symbols may be larger than others. For example, students may want a tree or building to be the backdrop for the mural.

4. Now students paste or draw symbols onto the mural and paint them. Make sure that each student shares a role in its creation. The mural should be named and hung somewhere in the school for all to enjoy!

Computer Option

- Students can explore on-line symbols of Canada. Students might research provincial and territorial flags and their origins and share their findings with the rest of the class.

Bringing it all Together

Create a class advertisement for Canada, sharing many reasons why Canada is a great country to live in. This advertisement can be shared with the other classes in the school or displayed in the local municipal office or library.

Suggested Resources

- Heritage Moment vignettes from your local library
- books from local libraries about Canadian provinces and territories
- *Canadian Provinces and Territories* (Ruth Solski, 2000)

Possible Extensions

Borrow Canada's Heritage Moments vignettes from your local library, including the vignette about *A Meeting of the School Trustees*. Discuss these with your students, and show a video on your own province or territory.

Create a truly Canadian classroom, decorating it with Canadian symbols and colours. Students might bring in items from home such as souvenirs, postcards, and books. Listen to Canadian music, including songs written about events in Canadian history.

