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Introduction

Canada's Evolving Identity

Canada is a vast land. In physical size, it is a bit larger than the United States. However, its population is only slightly more than a ninth of that of the United States. Most of its people live in a narrow band about 100 miles wide all along Canada's 3,000-mile border with the United States.

These facts throw light on several key themes in Canada's history and its current condition. Canada's vast size has meant that natural resource industries have been key to its rise as a wealthy and powerful industrial nation. Their role in Canada's economy is smaller today, when services and manufacturing comprise the bulk of Canadian production. But these natural resource industries helped shape the nation in many ways.

The concentration of population along Canada's southern border gives the nation a stretched-out quality, which only strengthens the cultural divides that make the country hard to unify. This fact also contributes to the political, economic, and cultural influence of the United States.

The visual displays in this booklet focus on all of these themes and more. Each lesson uses three visual displays to explore one broad topic. Briefly, the lessons are as follows:

A Prosperous Democracy

The photos and cartoons here call attention to Canada's wealth, its freedom, and its extensive social welfare and environmental programs and commitments.

Cultural Divides

The focus here is on long-standing tensions between French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians, and between native tribes and non-native Canadians.

Canada and the United States

The giant to the south is a constant presence in Canadian life. The cartoons here explore the economic, cultural, and diplomatic aspects of that looming presence.

Using Visual Images in the Classroom

Many textbooks today contain colorful visuals, but, all too often, these images function primarily to fill space or offer little educational value. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable, often doing little more than providing simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, school materials pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help the students master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as social or historical documents. The lessons in MindSparks booklets focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general and their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

After using the booklet, you may wish to look at some of the many other MindSparks products using editorial cartoons, photographs, posters, and other visual images.

How to Use This Booklet

This booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

A BACKGROUND-INFORMATION SHEET

This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY PAGES FOR EACH VISUAL DISPLAY

Each page includes one image, and a sequence of questions is provided to help you plan an all-classroom discussion while examining the image. The questions take students step-by-step through an analysis of the visual. For students who require more support to answer the questions, you may hand them an entire discussion-activity page reproducible in order to provide more visual support. For students who need less support to answer questions, keep the page yourself, and ask the questions of the class as a whole in order to provide a listening and response-writing activity. In addition to these questions, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. The instructions for these activities are directed to the student. Some are individual assignments while others work best as small-group or all-class activities. You may reproduce any of these pages for classroom use. Answers to factual questions are also provided on the inside back cover of the booklet.

ILLUSTRATIONS AND OTHER VISUAL ART

Images are printed alongside discussion questions and follow-up activities on reproducible pages, making them readily available to students. Stand-alone versions of all images, also reproducible, can be found in the appendix. Using images without the text may prove useful for testing or to encourage students to formulate their own analyses before consulting the text.

*Canada***OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will understand that Canada is one of the world's wealthiest industrialized nations.
2. Students will consider some aspects of Canada's generous health, social welfare, and environmental programs.

A Prosperous Democracy

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS**Illustration 1**

Canada's population in 2015 was about 35 million, a bit more than a ninth of the U.S. population. In physical size, however, Canada is larger than the United States. It is rich in many key resources—timber, oil, iron, copper, nickel, and many other minerals. As the top photo suggests, its vast, fertile plains produce huge amounts of grain. Canada is in fact one of the world's leading agricultural exporters. Yet it is also a highly industrialized, modern society—as the skyline of Montreal (bottom photo). Manufacturing, services, and financial industries make up the bulk of its production. Canada has one of the highest standards of living in the world. It is also an open society, with a vigorous democratic political system. Canada is clearly one of the world's success stories.

Illustration 2

Canada has a free-market, capitalist economy. However, it also provides many government-funded social welfare services, including health care. Canada's health care system ensures that all Canadians get the major health services they need. However, it takes high taxes to pay for these public health services. Some Canadians say this publically funded system is inefficient, causing shortages and other problems. In 2002, a special commission on health care was headed by a former provincial leader named Roy Romanow. Its report called for even more spending on the health care system. This cartoon takes a critical view both of the report and the health care system itself.

Illustration 3

Along with its many social welfare programs, Canada traditionally has been active in protecting the environment. In 2002, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien caused a controversy when he agreed to a treaty aimed at limiting one environmental problem—global warming. Chrétien agreed to the Kyoto Protocol, which requires nations to limit the greenhouse gases that are causing a slow warming trend in the world's climate. A large share of human-made greenhouse gases comes from the burning of oil, coal, and other fossil fuels. The Kyoto Protocol's limits on these gases could force businesses to pay much higher energy costs. In this cartoon, Chrétien is promising to help these businesses by making Canada's taxpayers bear the costs of the Kyoto greenhouse-gas limits.