

Annotated Curriculum Resource Guide: Canadian Identity

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At first glance, someone explaining Canadian identity may say something along the lines of Canadians being hockey-loving, beer-drinking farmers who say “sorry” too much and “eh” at the end of every sentence. Although these speculations of identity may be true, or partly true for some people living in Canada, these are mere stereotypes rather than identity markers and they are certainly not representative of many Canadian identities. Canada does have a long history of ice hockey which has brought the country together on many different occasions, such as winning the gold medal in the 2010 winter Olympics held in Vancouver or the women’s gold medal in 2002. Many Canadians may also greatly identify with Terry Fox and the amazing courage he had to battle a run across Canada; honouring Terry Fox is something the country still does to this day. Furthermore, the country prides itself on its beautiful mountains, vast prairies, and rich bodies of water. All of these important environmental wonders, people, or events in Canadian history have been part of shaping our country into what it is today. What many people do not understand, or choose to ignore, is that these things have only been one piece of the puzzle do not make up the whole picture.

Canada has an extremely unique culture that is yearning to be brought to life. Canada’s culture is filled is a vast array of identities from Indigenous Peoples, settlers and their offspring, and immigrants. Canada has been brought up in a primarily Eurocentric lens in schools which leads to very narrow and exclusive opinion of Canadian identity. This feeds into the issues and conflicts that teachers face when teaching this topic in class. The main concern about teaching Canadian identity is when teachers wrongfully ignore the sheer vastness of what that term can

mean. Canadian identity needs to be taught from different perspectives and angles in order for students to critically reflect on how Canadian identity is diverse. Furthermore, it is important for them to learn this way because it allows them to connect with and reflect on what it means to them, in their life, with their background, and their story. The topic of Canadian identity becomes a major issue in the classroom when it is viewed from a purely Eurocentric lens, intentionally choosing which other views are added or ignored. Unfortunately, that is how this topic has been taught in many cases. This annotated curriculum resource guide will shy away from a strictly Eurocentric lens to highlight other indispensable perspectives in order to include everyone's Canadian identity. Each of the resources below offers important ideas and concepts relating to the topic of Canadian identity. These resources range from ones that would be used by an educator to better understand the topic to resources that can be used in class to teach the topic. Some resources focus more on Indigenous or immigrant perspectives while others focus on the traditional idea of Canadian identity. The latter would be used in collaboration with the former in order to highlight the different perspectives that are held.

Adorante, E. (2019, Dec. 3). *Speaking Like a Canadian and Identity: Exploring Significant Historical Figures and Immigrant Communities in Canada*. Canada's History. <https://www.canadashistory.ca/education/lesson-plans/speaking-like-a-canadian-and-identity>

These lesson plans focus on how language, culture, and immigrant communities have impacted Canada's identity throughout history. This 5 class lesson plan highlights historical thinking by looking at continuity and change, significance, and evidence in addition to clear learning objectives. There are explanations of background information that will be important for

students to know before the commencement of these lessons. The lesson plan spans over 5 days and includes very hand-on and interactive activities as well as an end-of-unit reflection assessment. There are many visuals, videos, and other resources about heritage, culture, language, and Canadian identity that I will get my students to interact with in groups. This resource would be great to use, in addition to the other unit plan provided in this resource guide, because of the way they compliment each other. This one, for example, highlights the importance of language which is not directly addressed in the other unit plan but is important to cover. Furthermore, the other unit plan deals with artifacts which I believe can be a rich form of learning and engagement. Therefore, using the strengths and ideas from both these lesson plans, and the other unit plan, I can build a unit that includes diversity, immigration, Indigenous peoples, reflection, and interactive activities.

Bailey, D. (n.d.). *Canada! CANADIAN IDENTITY Discussion Topics, Writing Prompts*. Teachers Pay Teachers. <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/FreeDownload/Canada-CANADIAN-IDENTITY-Discussion-Topics-Writing-Prompts-FREE-1649658>

This resource is simple yet effective! It includes 8 prompts about Canadian Identity that could be used as discussion questions for small or large group discussions, sub-topic ideas for personal reference, or writing prompts for students. Each question (or a selection of questions) could be addressed at the beginning of class as the hook for the days lesson in either a discussion or personal writing format. These would most likely be used throughout the unit as starting points to push for critical thinking and reflection.

Carrier, R. (1984). *The Hockey Sweater*. In Barloow-Kedves, A., O'Grady, T., Onody, J., Mathieu, W., Tywoniuk, S. (1999). *Sightlines 8*. Prentice Hall Canada.

This short story is about a little boy in Montreal during the winter of 1946 where him and his hockey team all wore Maurice Richards number 9 Montreal Canadiens jersey. The boy talked about how much hockey engulfed their lives and their love and respect for Richards was so deep. He goes on to talk about a new sweater jersey he had to get because his was too small. His mom ordered one, however, when it arrived it was a Toronto Maple Leaves jersey and he was distraught. His mother made him wear it and against every fibre in his body he listened to his mom. In the end, he loses his temper on the ice because he is consistently not being played and he perceives it is because of the jersey he is wearing; he is then told to go to church and ask God for forgiveness for losing his temper. He then asks God to send "a hundred million moths that would eat up [his] Toronto Maple Leaves sweater (1984, p.50). This is a good story to use in this unit because it highlights a few parts of Canadian identity very well. One, it highlights the importance hockey and sports have on some peoples Canadian identity. It also uses hockey as a reference for society and how the French and English Identities are distinct. This short story would be useful to use in class because it will engage the students and it is loaded with metaphors for Canadian identity and society.

Essex, G. (2016). *A Common Ground Between Liberalism and Multiculturalism?: Addressing Citizenship and Canadian Identity in British Columbia's Social Studies Curriculum* [unpublished manuscript]. Masters of Education Department, University of British Columbia.

This UBC graduate research paper highlights the complications and history of multiculturalism in Canada as something that needs to be addressed education. The author argues that multiculturalism is something that has often been ignored and in order to equip students to become informed and active citizens, they need to be exposed to diverse perspectives. This is extremely important when teaching about Canadian identity because in order to begin to understand what Canadian identity truly means students have to look at it from different perspectives not solely a Eurocentric one. He also argues that multiculturalism is something that Canada prides itself on, however, has a very complex and controversial history. He argues that in history, Canada has made laws to Canadianize everyone in the country, he states that the goal was “immigration without changing the character of the nation.” (19) The exclusion of diverse cultures was something that could be achieved because the narratives that were being represented were all from a European lens (Essex, 2016, p.19). This is why it is important for us as educators to make explicit changes by including chronically unheard voices. In terms of this papers relation to the unit, it is useful for myself to gain more knowledge on the history of Canadian multiculturalism in order to teach my students about Canadian identity in an appropriate and critical way.

Goldie, D., Gaines, C., Thorogood, D., Wood, V., Groves, S., & Motz, L. (2020, July 2). What does it mean to be Canadian? Reflecting on Canadian Identity and the WW1 Internment Camps. *Ukrainian Canadian Students' Union*. <https://susk.ca/blog-posts/2020/07/02/what-does-it-mean-to-be-canadian-reflecting-on-canadian-identity-and-the-ww1-internment-camps/>

This blog was organized by a teacher doing his MA research project in a theatre class about historic racism in Canada. This blog highlights student and co-collaborator voices as they respond to their unit on Canadian identity and the WW1 Internment Camps. There are a series of student and co-collaborator reflections about their thoughts and personal connections to the topic of WW1 internment camps and Canadian identity. Their focus is on the internments of Ukrainians in Canada and how they were treated. This is a useful blog post for a few reasons. First, it is great for me to read and use as a resource when addressing the injustices of Canada's past and how they connect to Canadian identity. Second, it provides a great idea of a blog post assessment I could do with my class about their Canadian identity or a reflection on the unit. Lastly, I could show it to my class to, once again, highlight the diversity of Canadian identity and how everyone has a unique perspective of what it means to be Canadian and how the past has influenced the present.

Hayday, M. (2016). Canada's Day: Inventing a Tradition, Defining a Culture. In M. Hayday & R. Blake (Eds.), *Celebrating Canada: Holidays, National Days, and the Crafting of Identities* (ch. 11). University of Toronto Press.

This excerpt from *Celebrating Canada: Holidays, National Days, and the Crafting of Identities* took a very interesting approach to understanding Canadian identity. It focused on the July 1st celebrations that Canada has thrown over the years, how they have changed over time and how they speak loudly about the identity Canada is trying to portray. The author states that between Canada's Confederation 1867 and 1958 there were only two celebrations for Canada's "birthday," 1917 and 1927. Following 1950, Canada started to change its tune and work on

shaping its identity through a variety of forms including how the Country celebrates its “founding”. This excerpt addresses many questions and ideas that would encourage my students to critically think about Canada’s identity and how it was shaped. I could use the bones of this article to pose questions to the class and ask them how celebrations, advertisements, and merchandise surrounding Canada Day has shaped their views of our country. This excerpt connects well to the film Shameless Propaganda because they both focus on the mid-1900s as turning points in Canadian identity. Why is this? What did WWII have to do with Canada’s identity? In what ways did the actions and voices in WWII shape our identity? Do we see these forces today or have we moved past them? These are all questions that can drive further inquiry of how Canadian identity was shaped.

"I Love This Land" by Chief R. Stacey LaForme. (2017, Nov. 3). CBC Radio. [https://](https://www.cbc.ca/radio/sunday/the-sunday-edition-november-5-2017-1.4384859/i-love-this-land-by-chief-r-stacey-laforme-1.4386316)

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This poem was written by an Indigenous man who fought for Canada during WWI and he thoughts after he returned home. He was writing to a Caucasian friend who fought in the war along side of him. This poem is very optimistic and LaFrome is not dismissing the importance of everything his white friend is getting on his return from war- the praise, land, and property- he is simply asking, why aren't I getting this too? This poem is very powerful because it highlights the lack of acknowledgement the Canadian government gave Indigenous people when they fought for Canada just the same as everyone else. In Canada we are very proud of our soldiers and look up to our veterans fondly, it is a part of our identity. The issue comes when we leave out parts of

this identity as expressed in this poem. Indigenous people, immigrants, and other people of colour gave their lives, shed blood, and killed to protect Canada yet when they returned home it was like they never left. This is a great poem to analyze with the class during a unit on Canadian identity because it brings underrepresented voices to life. I would do this activity as a class near the beginning of the unit so we can unwrap these complexities together.

Jankovic, J. (2015 Dec. 15). *Teaching Canadian identity, nationhood, and media literacy with Shameless Propaganda*. National Film Board of Canada. <https://blog.nfb.ca/blog/2015/12/15/teaching-canadian-identity-nationhood-media-literacy-shameless-propaganda/>

This webpage was produced to help educators teach the film *Shameless Propaganda* in class. This resource focuses on a few different aspects of Canadian identity such as “what does it mean to be Canadian?”, the power of film, Canada, immigration, and difference during WWII, the “official” and “unofficial” representations of Canada’s identity, and bridging physical distance. In each of these focal points, there are discussion questions and ideas for teachers to consider when showing this film. This webpage is useful because it lays out the key points of the film for educators to easily refer to when teaching about Canadian identity and nationhood. This webpage is rich with questions and ideas which allows the educator room to choose what to focus on.

Lower, R. (Director), (2013). *Shameless Propaganda* [Film]. National Film Board of Canada.

This movie was released in 2013 to highlight the propaganda efforts of films created by the NFB before 1945. *Shameless Propaganda* used still photos and clips from 500 films created during WWII to allow viewers to see what type of identity and image the producers were trying to get across to Canadians and the rest of the world. *Shameless Propaganda* vividly shows what types of images these filmmakers were trying to portray in society during WWII. The films made prior to 1945 suggested that Indigenous and people of colour were savages, white men were hard workers, and women were caregivers. *Shameless Propaganda* is a great film to show students, in its entirety or in parts, to allow them to see the power of media and connect the past Canadian identity to the present. The pre-viewing activity could be brainstorming, as a class or in groups, how media affects the way people think and what propaganda is; the during-viewing activity could simply be addressing how Canada was being portrayed in these films; lastly, the post-viewing activity could be a simple discussion on how Canada portrayed its identity in the past and who that identity relates to today. The activity could also be extended to a compare and contrast paragraph or assignment for the kids to do more critical thinking and reflection.

Shaw, A. S. (2015). *Hannah and the Spindle Whorl*. Ronsdale Press.

The book, *Hannah and the Spindle Whorl*, is a story of a girl who comes across a spindle whorl hidden near her home in Cowichan Bay which transports her back in time about 150 years to an Indigenous community. She meets a girl and her mom and befriends them. The girl's mother ends up dying of smallpox and the two get left behind while the villagers move on as the settlers are coming in. They go through many trials and manage to save the precious spindle whorl and escape the area the settlers took over. Through these events, Hannah is able to reflect on herself

and the hardships she has gone through to better understand her identity and Indigenous history. She shares her feelings, hopes, and fears to give the reader a good sense of life before settlers arrived. The book can be used throughout the unit on Canadian Identity for the whole class to read and do writing responses on. It is a very appropriate book for jr. grades as it is easy to read and relatable. It allows the students to read about different perspectives of Canada and how one's identity is not solely based on the Canadian culture we are accustomed to today.

TEDx Talks (2019, May 13). *TEDx University of Toronto - Riley Yesno- It's Time to Re-imagine Canada's 'nice' Identity* [Video]. Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZih64Z2wxQ&t=480s>

This TEDx talk was released in 2019 and challenges the misconceptions and misrepresentations of Canadian identity. Riley Yesno shares her views of Canadian identity as an Indigenous person and an Indigenous Rights advocate. She emphasizes the importance of consciously re-thinking how we see Canadian identity and how we should let it shape us. She highlights the importance of understanding Canadian identity as having more than the one perspective that started at confederation 153 years ago. Rather, people should look at Canada as having another equally important lens, the perspectives of Indigenous people. Yens talks about Canadians as being “nice,” however, she challenges this idea by asking “who are we ‘nice’ to?” “Who believes Canada’s identity is ‘nice’?” “The Indigenous people or the settlers?” By reflecting on the answer to this question, it makes us think about who’s voice is amplified in Canadian society. This TEDx talk is useful for personal reference as an educator to better understand the controversy of the topic; furthermore, it could also be used in the classroom to

shine a light on the complexities of Canadian identity in a student-friendly way. This TEDx talk could be used to spark discussion in class about understating that Canadian identity comes from a variety of different perspectives.

The Critical Thinking Consortium. (2015, April). *Inquiry-pacs 6A Unit synopsis*. https://tc2.ca/inquiry-pacs/download_inquirypac_item.php?id=10419

This unit synopsis about “Community Stories and Canadian Identity” focuses on two possible paths of inquiry that the teacher could take their students on. To begin, covering both strands, the unit plan has the overarching inquiry question “[h]ow can we most effectively communicate what it means to be Canadian?” The unit plan goes on to highlight big ideas that the unit will cover. The first inquiry path the educator could follow focuses on what it means to be Canadian today; the other path focuses on how different historical perspectives and experiences shape Canada’s identity today. The unit plan is broken up into a two-part unit plan and subsequent lesson plans for both of the lines inquiry. Both inquiry focuses are very important, therefore, I may use this document by merging the two inquiry questions together and focusing on the important themes of each. This will allow my students an opportunity to learn about our Canadian identity today as well as how different past experiences and perspectives have shaped our identity. Furthermore, I will highlight the importance of addressing these different perspectives and challenging our current perceptions of Canadian identity. This resource is extremely useful for me as an educator because it provides a potential outline of the unit I am creating in which I can draw from and use for reference. This unit plan is for a grade 6 level so I

would have to upscale some of the ideas, questions, and activities to fit a grade 8 humanities class.

Varma, M. (2000). *Multicultural children's literature: Storytelling the Canadian identity* (NQ53715) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Chapter 2 of the book *Multicultural children's literature: Storytelling the Canadian identity* highlights how the Canadian school system uses literature to portray the preferred citizenship of students. They suggest that schools pick and choose certain literature as a way to control the types of citizens we are creating in school. For example, they emphasize the common use of the textbook as a resource even though chronically leaves out important perspectives such as Indigenous peoples and minority groups. They suggest that the romantic and optimistic parts of society are highlighted in textbooks as being of equal importance whereas negative histories are often left out. Multicultural literature is reviewed in this chapter as a way to expand the idea of National identity in the classroom. Furthermore, the author discusses the undesirable areas of Canadian identity, such as residential schools, that are not talked about as frequently and are not something many Canadians want to address. Overall, the chapter suggests that literature in the classroom greatly shapes the type of identity we are portraying to our students. This book is useful because it argues how literature can be useful and fragile in the classroom. It looks at the history of literature used in the classroom and gives great detail and references for further personal inquiry on this topic. Chapter 2, and likely other parts of the book, is useful for an

educator to read when preparing to address a complex topic like Canadian identity to gain a greater understanding of how to teach it in a way that is inclusive and critical.