

# Historica Canada Education Portal

## Designing a Cover: Commemorative Publications

### Overview

Students will assume the role of editor for a commemorative publication; they will be encouraged to use history in practical applications.

### Aims

#### Prescribed Learning Outcomes:

- Plan and conduct library and community research using primary and secondary print and non-print sources, including reliable electronic sources.
- Generate and critique different interpretations of primary and secondary sources.
- Assess and defend a variety of positions on controversial issues.
- Apply critical thinking, including questioning, comparing, summarizing, drawing conclusions, and defending a position, to make reasoned judgments about a range of issues, situations and topics.

#### Concepts in Historical Thinking: Historical Significance

Students will be able to demonstrate how an event, person or development is significant by showing how it is embedded in a larger,

meaningful narrative.

*Aspects of historical significance:*

1. Resulting in change (The event/person/development had deep consequences, for many people, over a long period of time.)
2. Revealing (The event/person/development sheds light on enduring or emerging issues in history and contemporary life or was important at some stage in history within the collective memory of a group or groups.)

## **Background**

Students should be able to complete the task without much background knowledge. However, the teacher may glean richer responses if students have fuller background knowledge of Canadian history.

## **Activities**

**Time Allowance:** One period

### **Procedures:**

Lesson Preparation

1. Background on Historical Significance: if the students have not been introduced to the concept of Historical Significance they will need some background on this concept. The teacher will need to introduce the concept to build on students' prior knowledge and guide their thinking. To explain this topic clearer have the students look up Louis Riel, Champlain, or Trudeau in their textbooks, then have them look up a

friend or relative. Ask students to explain why one is there and the other not.

2. Continue to explain that the past is everything that ever happened to anyone anywhere. We cannot remember or learn it all. We put effort into learning about and remembering that which is historically significant, but we need to reflect on how those choices are made. Many people simply take what is presented to them (by the textbook or teachers) to be significant, but among historians and people who care about history there is often much debate. Because so many people look to history to help them understand their lives and the world they live in, it is important to understand what the debate is all about.

3. If possible, ask students to brainstorm reasons why the author of their textbook included certain topics and not their relatives. Look at the topics in the table of contents or index and ask them to decide why these were included.

4. Help students explore historical significance. As a class identify the Benchmarks criteria for historical significance and compile a list.

- Results in deep, long lasting change that influences many people.
- Reveals something about the past.
- Sheds light on contemporary issues or is relevant to us today.
- Or is part of a larger, meaningful narrative.

5. Place the students in groups of four or five. Ask the students to put themselves in the mind of an editor of their history textbook. Ask them to speculate on why the editor chose the image they did to put on the cover of the textbook, or put on the first pages of different chapters. Ask students what, besides the image's aesthetic qualities, the editor must

have in mind when choosing an image. Be sure students are aware of the explanation of the image's significance, if available.

6. As students if they think the cover image is historically significant. Review the list of criteria for historical significance as a group and model the identification of historical significance for the class.

7. In their groups, have the students examine their textbooks. Have each individual find one image, other than the cover image, that she or he believes should have been on the cover. Students should fill out the **Historical Significance Assessment Worksheet** (attached below) for their image. Students may need to consult the Internet or their textbooks to identify the background for each image's event. Teachers should also direct students to utilize all image captions.

8. Have the students, as individuals, present their images to their groups. Instruct them to explain why the images they chose are historically significant and worthy of consideration as the cover image.

9. After everyone in a group has presented their images instruct students to decide on one image that they will present to the class. Have the group members determine which of the group's images fits the criteria of historical significance most completely. Note – This question is deliberately vague and is designed to foster debate. The debate in this section is essential to students' understanding of historical significance.

10. Have each group present its image to the class for consideration and explain why it is the most historically significant image in the textbook? Outline the key sections in the Historical Significance Activity Sheet for each image as a class.

11. Task: Have students suppose that it is not too late to change the image and complete a letter to the editor outlining their petition to change the cover image of the textbook.

## **Resources**

The Historical Thinking Project - Explaining [Historical Significance](#)  
[The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)