

Historica Canada Education Portal

Your Birthday in History

Overview

Have your students explore history and the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking concept Historical Significance. Students will discover noteworthy events that happened on their birth dates in history. Students will be asked to produce a project, with a format that fully complements and highlights the topic chosen. Research, interpretive, and presentation skills will be highlighted while working with history relevant to each student.

Aims

Prescribed Learning Outcomes:

- Plan and conduct library and community research using primary and secondary print and non-print sources, including electronic sources.
- Generate and critique different interpretations of primary and secondary sources.
- Assess and defend a variety of positions on controversial issues, after considering a variety of perspectives
- 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.

You should expect students to be able to:

- identify and clarify a problem, issue or inquiry;
- develop alternative interpretations from varied sources;
- defend a position on a regional issue in light of alternative perspectives;
- design, implement and assess strategies to address community problems or projects.
- gather and record a body of information from a variety of primary and secondary print and non-print sources, including electronic sources;
- interpret and evaluate a variety of primary and secondary sources;
- plan, revise and deliver formal written and oral presentations;
- co-operatively plan and implement a course of action that addresses the problem, issue or inquiry initially identified.
- assess the reliability, currency and objectivity of different interpretations of primary and secondary sources;

Concepts in Historical Thinking:

This lesson may encompass many of the Benchmarks for Historical Thinking concepts depending on the direction the students take the project; however, this lesson plan focuses on historical significance. 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:

- Resulting in change. The event/person/development had deep consequences, for many people, over a long period of time.
- 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. Experience working with primary source material and familiarity with the Benchmarks concept Historical Significance are helpful but not essential.

Activities

Time Allowance: 5-6 classes

Procedures:

1. *Background on Historical Significance:* if the students have not been introduced to the concept of Historical Significance they will need some background. 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.

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

5. Asks students what happened on their birthdays in history (try to maintain the focus on Canadian history). You may want students to complete this in small groups or individually, depending on their grade level or experience working with the concept of Historical Significance.

6. Have students do further Internet and library research on their topics and events, collecting relevant information and images.

7. As part of their project, conduct an interview with each student to assess their overall knowledge of the subject. Pay specific attention to a student's ability to relate to the historical significance of her/his subject.

Resources

[The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[The Canadian Encyclopedia's Searchable Timeline](#)