

Historica Canada Education Portal

Novel Study

Overview

Students will read a Canadian novel to determine whether it provides an accurate picture of a Canadian event, experience, or character. In order to complete the assignment, students are expected to note the political, social, and economic circumstances outlined in the novel. Using primary and secondary sources the students will then write a report outlining the value of the novel as a historical source.

Aims

Students will:

- make judgements about the significance of people and events based on whether they brought about widespread change, had enduring consequences or revealed something important about the past
- select and interpret primary and secondary source evidence in order to retell and explain the past as objectively and accurately as possible
- analyze the multiple causes and consequences of past events and the role of human intentions in these events
- formulate and clarify historical questions to guide inquiry

- record and organize information from a range of primary and secondary sources
- cite a variety of types of historical sources accurately
- assess the reliability, validity, and authenticity of sources of historical information
- analyze similarities and differences between the past and the present
- communicate information and ideas in a variety of formats appropriate for audience and purpose

Background

The unit is best taught after the students are well-versed in evaluating sources and have a good sense of the major events in Canadian history. Students should be allowed to report on any novel that is appropriate to their reading level, and which they can show will be appropriate for the task. A list of authors is [attached](#).

Activities

Time Allowance: 3 weeks

[Begin by consulting the worksheet "Using Historical Fiction and Film to Understand History."](#)

Procedures:

Day 1: Set out expectations and provide an evaluation rubric ([attached](#)). Begin viewing a Canadian film (such as *Bon Cop-Bad Cop*), stopping occasionally to have students point out economic, political, or social circumstances they are noting, and relate that to reality as they understand it.

Day 2: Finish viewing film. Divide class into groups of three to four and have them research the economic, political, and social circumstances surrounding the film to determine what is correct and what is incorrect. For example, the *Bon Cop-Bad Cop* film can be used to learn about NHL hockey in Canada, divorce rates, police jurisdictions and procedures, French-English relations, and organized crime.

Day 3: Students will report orally on their findings and then begin to prepare a short written individual report, to ensure they remember how to organize a paper and cite their sources properly. This formative assignment is handed in and the students receive feedback on how to improve.

Optional additional activity: Formative assignment is shared through a version of speed dating. Each student passes their paper to the left and is given five minutes to read and then pass on. They are expected to do three things during the time they have a classmates paper: comment on what they like, suggest ways to improve, and keep notes on what ideas they want to use in their paper.

Day 5 and 6: Lesson on citing sources and then class time to work on reading and researching.

Day 6: First draft writing.

Day 7: Peer edit and teacher edit day.

Day 8: Second draft due to be edited.

Day 9: Work on final draft.

Day 10: Oral reporting by students.

Evaluation:

[Attached](#)

Resources

Students should be allowed to select from a wide list of Canadian literature. See the [attached](#) list of Canadian authors, but be open to student suggestion.

[The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)