

Historica Canada Education Portal

Letters from the Past

Overview

The student will write a fictitious letter as if they are a pioneer in the Canadian west in the early part of the twentieth century. The student is to include the changes and challenges homesteaders would face and the adjustments to their lifestyle these would cause. As well, the student also must include a drawing depicting their fictitious dwelling.

Background

This study focuses on the people who have contributed to Canada's history and development, beginning with the original inhabitants, and tracing the people in Canada's history. It focuses on the lives of Canadians through a case study of a homestead settlement.

Questions and Issues for Inquiry:

How have changes and challenges caused Canadians to adjust their lifestyles?

How have Canadians adjusted their lifestyles to meet changes and challenges?

What impact did the influx of homesteaders have on the Canadian west?

Why did they come?

What did they bring?

How did they influence the lifestyle of homesteaders already established?

What was their contribution to the province?”

Activities

1. The students will imagine what items they would need if they were stranded in a forest far from civilization with nothing with them but the clothes on their body. In groups they brainstorm what items they would need. The student will focus on NEEDS as opposed to DESIRES. Next each group will prioritize their NEEDS list. The students should make a web on where their family gets their food, clothing and shelter/land that they need to survive. The class share these webs.
2. The students will read and analyze authentic homesteader letters, or textbook accounts of other homesteaders. Then they make a web on how this Canadian homesteading family met their basic needs.
3. Students research homesteader lifestyles. Students should use a variety of sources.
4. Students will write a letter from the perspective of a Canadian homesteader. They should establish their own character, who they are writing to, where they came from, where they are going, why they are going, and what sort of obstacles they have experienced. Have they consider all of the questions in the Background section based on the perspective of their character.
5. As an option, students can draw a historically accurate diagram of their homestead. They will explain to the Land Titles Officer (teacher) where in the west they chose to live and why. The student will be challenged as to what difficulties the location may give (i.e. Too far away from railroad, not

close enough to water.) Students are permitted to change location.

Resources

[The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)