

Historica Canada Education Portal

Jacques Plante

Overview

This lesson is based on viewing the [Heritage Minute, "Jacques Plante,"](#) which focuses on the 1959 hockey game when Plante wore the goalie mask that he invented.

Aims

After examining the "Jacques Plante" Minute, students will write opinion pieces and articles about Plante's decision to wear a mask. Students will also consider how his decision challenged notions of "masculinity."

Plante's decision to wear a mask challenged the social conventions of the time. Students will discuss how their own personal safety decisions are affected by social and group pressure. Students will also be presented with several topics for class debate.

Activities

1. Making headlines

Write a news article for the *Montréal Gazette* for Monday 2 November

1959.

- Bring in some sports stories from current newspapers. Read them, noting some of the common characteristics of sports reporting. Help students see that the "five W's" of Who, What, Where, When, and Why often appear in the first paragraph. Also look at the way sports stories often use nicknames, euphemisms, and colourful verbs and adjectives.
- Write a news story based on the story and the Minute. The focus of the article will be Plante's appearance in the goalie mask. The writer may reveal his or her opinion about Plante's decision, either in the language the writer chooses or in the concluding paragraph.
- Sports columnists often write "opinion pieces" about personalities and issues in sports. Students may write about Plante's decision and its effect on hockey, or they may choose another related issue. Have students research recent rule changes in NHL hockey, junior hockey, or minor hockey. A columnist may have some strong opinions about the wisdom in hockey, violence in the game, and whether expansion is good for hockey.
- Another journalistic option is to create an interview with Jacques Plante. Brainstorm questions for the goalie, then conduct a written or videotaped interview, with students taking on the roles of the reporters and goalie. They may also take the roles of Toe Blake or Andy Bathgate.

2. Breaking stereotypes

We do not usually think of sports as leading social change, but in his own way, Jacques Plante's decision to wear a mask points out some changes in our ideas about courage and masculinity.

- Some hockey fans thought Plante was a "sissy" for wearing the mask. Do you think it took more courage for Plante to play without the mask or to put it on for the first time? Present arguments for both sides.

3. Social pressure

Plante's concern for personal safety and the social pressure he faced parallel many health and safety concerns faced by students today.

Have students work in small groups to generate a list of their own health and safety concerns (wearing seatbelts, bike helmets, dangerous noise levels at rock concerts, drinking and driving, etc). Older students may include AIDS and sexually-transmitted diseases, so the teacher should prepare to discuss these issues.

Discuss each issue raised, considering these questions: How much pressure do you face in making a personal safety decision? When have you gone against your social group? How strong is the social pressure amongst your peers? How do you feel when you make a decision that challenges the group?

4. Issues in sports

Sports can be the subject for lively debate, whether students are "fans" or not.

Divide the class into groups, and give each group a debate topic to prepare. Make sure the class understands proper debate procedure and

rules.

Resolved: The status of women's athletics is separate and unequal.

Resolved: Mixed gender teams will ruin competitive sports.

Resolved: Violence is a necessary part of hockey.

Resolved: Interest in competitive sports is an essential ingredient of masculinity.

The debate may lead to a writing assignment. Have students choose some of the arguments presented in the debates to write an expository essay defending one of the theses.

Resources

- [Heritage Minute: Jacques Plante](#)
- [The Canadian Encyclopedia: Jacques Plante](#)

