

Historica Canada Education Portal

Bluenose

Overview

This lesson is based on viewing the [Bluenose Heritage Minute](#), which portrays the champion *Bluenose* schooner racing against an American ship in the 1938 race.

Aims

Students will discuss the significance of the *Bluenose* as a recognizable Canadian symbol, and they will research the history of the Atlantic cod fishery.

Students will discuss two of the themes that emerge in the story of the *Bluenose*: Canada's relations with the United States, and Canada's resource based economy.

Activities

1. The great cod fishery

The Heritage Minute on the *Bluenose* (together with the Heritage Minute about John Cabot) can enliven a Social Studies unit on the Maritimes.

The *Bluenose* was not only a racing schooner, she was also one of the great fishing boats of the great age of the Grand Banks cod fishery. Today, with that fishery closed, it is hard to believe that over one billion pounds (over 453 million kilograms) of cod were caught each year on the Grand Banks. The *Bluenose* herself landed a record 646,000 pounds (over 293,020 kg) in one haul in 1923!

Divide students into groups to research and report on the cod fishery on the Grand Banks. Topics might include: fishing methods; the geography of the Grand Banks; history of the fishery; life on the schooners in the early 20th century; wrecks and rescues; and the story of the *Bluenose*.

2. Symbols

Students should recognize the *Bluenose* from the back of the dime, where the great schooner has been pictured since 1937. It has become a symbol of Canada.

- After watching the Minute, remind students that they have seen the *Bluenose* many times on the dime. Why was the *Bluenose* chosen for the ten cent piece? Lead the discussion on to the ways that objects and animals become symbols for the country. Why did the beaver and the maple leaf become symbols? Does the *Bluenose* have any special qualities that made people admire it and want to identify themselves and their country with it?

- Look at other kinds of symbols - provincial and local emblems, sports team mascots or names, etc. Which ones do students think are effective and which ones do they think are silly or confusing.

- Have students create their own symbols for the school or a real or

imaginary local team. Have them write an explanation for their symbol, describing the qualities of the object or animal that make it appropriate or the connection with the locale that makes it fitting.

- As an option, have the students adapt their symbol into a logo design for a uniform, a flag, or a coat of arms.

3. Us vs. them

The *Bluenose* became famous by defeating the schooners of Canada's closest friend and principal rival, the United States. Canadians seem to have a love/hate relationship with our southern neighbour.

- Explore the class' attitudes about the United States. It might be worthwhile to create two categories on the board, under headings FACTS and OPINIONS. Put students' statements about the USA under the appropriate headings. ("Many Americans own handguns" may go under Facts, while "Americans are violent" should probably be an Opinion.)

- What attitudes about Americans predominate? Have students summarize. Does a stereotypical American appear?

- Now create similar lists for Canadians. Does a stereotype emerge for Canadians? What are the most important differences between Canadians and Americans? What are the similarities?

In summary, why do Canadians often hold negative attitudes toward Americans? Can they be justified?

4. Resource economy

Behind the triumph of the *Bluenose* lies one of the saddest stories in recent Canadian history - the collapse of the Grand Banks fishery.

- Have a group of students make a brief presentation to the class on the various explanations for the decline and crash of the cod fishery.

- In a subsequent discussion brainstorm the other natural resources that Canada has depended upon for its economic survival. The list should include fur, timber, many different minerals, and oil and gas. It may also include various agricultural products.

- Briefly discuss the effects of a resource-based economy. Can such an economy be sustained? Can it be stable? Can Canada find new resources as limited ones are depleted? Are there alternatives available to Canada?

- Debate the question: Should Canada continue to depend upon resource industries?

Resources

- [Heritage Minute: Bluenose](#)

- [The Canadian Encyclopedia: Bluenose](#)
- [The Canadian Encyclopedia: Feature Articles - Bluenose: "I gave her the power to carry sail"](#)