

Historica Canada Education Portal

Hart & Papineau

Overview

This lesson is based on viewing the [Heritage Minute, "Hart & Papineau."](#) Under the tenure of Louis-Joseph Papineau, the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada passed a bill in 1832 that ultimately guaranteed full rights to people practicing the Jewish faith. It was the first of the British colonies to do so.

Aims

After discussing and making sense of the events that take place in the "Hart and Papineau" Minute, students will watch additional related Heritage Minutes to develop their understanding of how democracy developed in Canada.

Students will expand on the theme of democracy that is explored in the "Hart and Papineau" Minute to look at the issue of minority rights in Canada. Students will research the histories of minority groups in Canada and the discrimination they have encountered.

Background

The year is 1808. Ezekiel Hart has been elected to the Assembly of Lower Canada (now Québec), and tries to take his oath of office. But Joseph Papineau, another Member, protests that Hart, as a Jew, cannot take the oath on the Christian Bible and, therefore, cannot sit as a Member. The Speaker of the Assembly agrees, and Hart is expelled. But as he leaves, Hart confronts Joseph Papineau's son, the newly-elected Louis-Joseph Papineau, and challenges him to right the injustice. Years pass; it is 1832, and Louis-Joseph Papineau, now the Speaker of the Assembly, proclaims a new law, which gives democratic rights to Jews. In the final scene, Speaker Papineau leads the aged Ezekiel Hart out of the Assembly building in an act of courtesy and respect.

Activities

1. Watching the Minute

This Heritage Minute is very concentrated, and it may confuse students on first viewing. This summary available in the Background section may be helpful to teachers following the story.

Explain that the Minute deals with injustices that Jews experienced at one time in Lower Canada, now the Province of Québec. Tell students to watch the Minute carefully and try to follow the story. As they watch, they should try to recognize the principal characters and the main actions.

After they have watched the Minute once, review the plot by asking questions.

- Who was the man standing at the beginning of the Minute, and what was he doing?

- Does anyone in the class know why he wears a hat while no one else does?
- Why does the other man complain?
- Who is the man in the white wig who stands in the front of the Hall? What decision does he make?
- Who is the younger man that the first character encounters as he leaves?
- How much time passes before the next scene?
- Who is the man in the white wig in the later scene? What does he say, and how does it relate to the earlier action?
- Who are the two men in the closing scene? Why is that scene there?

Once the action is clear, watch the Minute once again.

2. Developing Democracy

Democracy was a young and unfamiliar idea in the early 1800s. In Canada, as in England and other British colonies, only wealthy male Christian landowners had a say in political decisions. The gradual development of democracy meant including a wider range of participants and increasing the powers of all citizens.

- Watch some of the Heritage Minutes that deal with political rights and the evolution of democracy in Canada: Hart and Papineau, Étienne Parent, Nellie McClung, and Emily Murphy.
- After each Minute, discuss the plot of the story (and view again, if necessary), then record the date and summarize the importance of the events depicted to the development of democratic institutions in Canada. (For Nellie McClung, for example, the explanation might read "Women win the right to vote in federal elections.")

- Discuss what landmarks of democracy do not appear in your list. For instance, when did Chinese Canadians win the vote? What about Indigenous peoples? When were women in Québec allowed to vote in provincial elections?
- Assign students research topics to fill in the gaps to create a more complete "Developing Democracy in Canada" timeline.
- As an addition, students might script new Heritage Minutes based upon the stories of those additional developments.

3. Minority Rights

As this Heritage Minute shows, Lower Canada was the first British colony to extend civil rights to its Jewish members, though the rights were won after a long struggle, and securing them did not end discrimination against Jews in Canada.

- Discuss the difficulties Ezekiel Hart faced in the Minute. Why was he denied the right to sit as a Member of the Assembly, even though he had been elected by his local constituency? What are the rights of a minority within a "majority rules" democracy?
- What other ethnic groups have also faced discrimination in Canada? If students are not familiar with the stories of Chinese Canadians, you may wish to watch the Heritage Minute, "Nitro" to make them more familiar.
- Divide the class into groups to do research on the histories of minority groups in Canada. You may choose some or all of the following: Jewish Canadians, Chinese Canadians, Indo-Canadians, Japanese Canadians,

African Canadians, Ukrainian Canadians, Mennonites, Doukhobors, or Italian Canadians (among others). You may wish to include Canada's Indigenous peoples as individual language or tribal groups, or as a whole.

- In researching the minority groups, have the students outline the history of settlement by the group, explain major events in their history, and key people who represented them. Ask students to discuss the particular forms of discrimination they faced.

- Have the groups prepare their findings as an oral presentation to the class or as a written report that can be shared and discussed with the rest of the class.

Resources

- [Heritage Minute: Hart & Papineau](#)

- [The Canadian Encyclopedia: Louis-Joseph Papineau](#)
- [Canadian Citizenship Challenge](#)