



CANADA DURING COVID-19: A LIVING ARCHIVE

Junior-Level Learning Tool

Countries, communities, and individuals around the world are grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic. How will historians remember this time in history? **Canada During COVID-19: A Living Archive** is meant to capture the experiences of everyday Canadians as they live through this challenging time. Canadians from coast to coast to coast and of all ages and walks of life are encouraged to submit to the archive – photographs, poems, videos, pieces of writing. The archive aims to build and foster connections with each other, our communities, and our country through the sharing of experiences and perspectives during COVID-19.

Canada During COVID-19 will act as an archive of lived experience for future historians, scholars, and the general public. How did Canada experience COVID-19?

This resource provides guidance for educators and students in grades 4 to 6 interested in participating in the **Canada During COVID-19** project. A project of Historica Canada, the **Canada During COVID-19 Junior-Level Learning Tool** encourages students to think more deeply about primary sources and the ways historians use them to uncover the past. Students will have the chance to develop a primary source of their own, based on their unique experiences and perspectives during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Canada During COVID-19** offers you and your students the opportunity to contribute to our archive and to participate in creating a living history.

[Historica Canada](#) offers programs that you can use to explore, learn, and reflect on our history, and to what it means to be Canadian.

How to submit to the Canada During COVID-19 archive

1. Send us your submission at covidarchive@historicacanada.ca.
2. Post your submission on Instagram and share with us by tagging [@canadaduringcovid](#). If you have a private Instagram account, send us your submission via direct message, or email it to us at covidarchive@historicacanada.ca. Remember that this is a public archive, so anything you submit may be posted on the [@canadaduringcovid](#) public Instagram account. Be sure to have permission from the students' parents before entering their work to the archive.

Click below to share with us on Instagram

#CanadaDuringCovid



[@CanadaDuringCovid](#)



Note to Teachers

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all. Younger students may have a difficult time making sense of or explaining their experiences to others. Remember to approach the topic with sensitivity and offer support or resources to struggling students when applicable.

What are Primary Sources?

A **primary source** is any document or object created during an event in the past. Examples of primary sources include letters, diary entries, newspapers, photographs, art, and more. Primary sources are usually related to a specific person, place, thing, or event. A primary source can be a physical object (for example, an item of clothing or a handwritten diary) or a digital object (something created with a computer, such as a video or a website).

Imagine that historians are detectives investigating the past. To historians, primary sources are clues about how people lived in a time or place. When historians are studying the past, they gather clues – primary sources – as evidence to help solve the mystery of what life was like back then. Historians will carefully examine the evidence they gather, and then develop theories about what happened. They then use more clues to confirm their theories and make conclusions. It is important for historians to examine more than one clue. Primary sources are like pieces of a puzzle – the more pieces you have, the better you can see the picture.

Some primary sources are created to intentionally tell a story. For example, someone writing their day-to-day experiences in a diary is telling the story of their life. Other primary sources can tell a story, even if that was not their original purpose. For example, a television commercial is designed to sell something, but for historians in the future it can also provide important information about what people were buying and using.

Primary sources from the past are often stored in museums or archives. There, they can be protected, historians can study them, and people like you can see them. **Canada During COVID-19: A Living Archive** is a **digital archive**. A **digital archive** means that the primary sources are stored online, where we can all study and view them. Even if a primary source is a physical object, for example, a facemask, it can be stored in a digital archive by taking and uploading a photo of the object.

In addition to primary sources, historians can also use **secondary sources** to help understand the past. Secondary sources are created after the time period being studied. They are reflections or analyses of something that happened in the past, for example, a documentary or a biography. Historians use both primary and secondary sources together to understand the past.



PART 1:

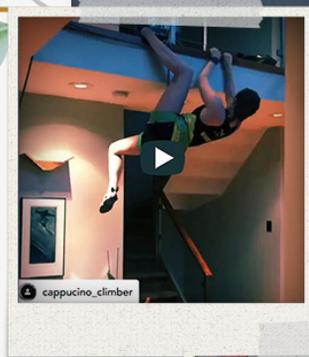
To have students become familiar with the concept of primary sources and how they can be used, ask students to find a primary source item in their house that was created before they were born. This could be a household cookbook or recipe, a photo album, or a piece of clothing. Ask them to describe the item using the 5Ws (who, what, where, when, and why). What does this primary source tell them about a time before they were alive? How does it help them better understand what life was like in the past?

PART 2:

Have students make a list of seven to ten things they have seen over the last day or two related to COVID-19. This could be a poster they saw on a store window, a commercial on TV about washing your hands, or a song someone wrote. Then, have students pick three to five primary sources from their list that they would recommend to future historians as the most useful for helping explain this time period. Have them explain why they think these items best represent the time we are living in.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Why is it important to look at both intentional (e.g., a diary entry) and unintentional (e.g., an advertisement) primary sources when studying the past? What can intentional sources tell us about the past that unintentional sources cannot, and vice versa?



Student Prompt

If you were to travel to the future, a hundred years from now, what items would you bring to teach people in the future about life during COVID-19? Think about which primary sources from the COVID-19 pandemic would be the most helpful clues to historians trying to understand this time.



Activity 2: Creating a Primary Source

Historians analyze primary sources from the past. However, today we are all in a position to create primary sources for future historians. Creating a primary source is similar to making a time capsule. The primary sources your students create will reflect both themselves and the time they are living in. What they submit as a primary source will be used to help future generations understand what life was like during COVID-19. Historians will want to know how people's personal lives, relationships, activities, work and school, technology, consumer habits, etc., changed during – and as a result of – the pandemic. In what ways will your students' primary sources contribute to future understandings of Canada during this time?

PART 1: THINKING ABOUT EXPERIENCES

Your students have the opportunity to create their own primary source. Get your students thinking about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic by having a discussion using the following guiding questions:

- How have you been spending your time outside (e.g., walking with your family or playing in the backyard with your dog)?
- How have you been spending your time inside (e.g., talking to your family, playing video games, doing puzzles)?
- What have you been thinking about during this time?
- Have you learned anything new during this time?
- Do any feelings, sounds, or images come to mind when you think about your experiences during COVID-19?

COVID-19 has impacted all aspects of life. Use the following list as a prompt to get your students thinking about the different areas of life that COVID-19 has impacted. Students can organize their thoughts as a mind map. The topics below could be the smaller bubbles around the main “COVID-19” bubble. Which areas can they personally relate to?

- Technology
- Family
- Friends
- Free time
- School
- Food and drink
- Entertainment

Teacher Tip

Primary sources come in different forms. Some are visual, others rely on sound or the written word. Have your students brainstorm different ways they can tell their story. For example, a comic strip, a poem, a video interview, or a series of photographs. Students can choose to submit their primary source in the format that allows them to best express their experience.



PART 2: CREATING A PRIMARY SOURCE

Now it is time for your students to create their own primary source. The first step historians take in analyzing a primary source is reviewing the 5Ws (who, what, where, when, and why). Students can also use the 5Ws and the prompts below to help them organize their experiences and determine a primary source that encapsulates their experience(s):

- **Who** made it? Think about what details you want to share with future historians. You might want to include information like your age, your first language, or other biographical details.
- **What** does it show? Try to make a certain emotion, idea, or image clear in your source.
- **Where** was it created? For example, during a walk, in your bedroom, at the kitchen table. You might want to include the region/province where you live.
- **When** was it created? Our experience of COVID-19 changes over the course of the pandemic. Dating your creation helps historians place your source in time.
- **Why** did you make it?

While all this information does not need to be reflected in the actual submission itself, including this information in accompanying text (like in the written reflection in **Activity 3**, the text in a social media post, or in the body of an email) provides valuable information for future use.





Activity 3: Reflecting

FOLLOW UP:

After your students have created their primary source, have them write a short reflection (three to four sentences) explaining their submission. Why did they create or select that submission to include in the archive? What does their submission say about their experience?

DIGITAL CLASS DISCUSSION:

How do you think primary sources from the beginning of the pandemic might be different from those one month into the pandemic? Two months? Do you envision change over time? Write down a few predictions, explaining your reasoning behind them, and share them with your teacher or with your online classroom.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Have your students submit something to the archive each week or bi-weekly. Later, have a class circle or discussion about how their weekly submissions evolved over time. Here are some guiding questions to get your students started:

- How do your submissions change from week to week? What is different or similar from the start to the end?
- What do your submissions say about how you experienced the pandemic? Did your experience change or stay the same as it went on?
- What do you know now that you didn't know when you made your first submission?

Teacher Tip



Remember that this is a public archive so anything you or your students submit may be posted on the [@canadaduringcovid](https://www.instagram.com/canadaduringcovid) public Instagram account. Be sure to have permission from the students' parents before entering their work to the archive.



Teacher Rubric

For teachers who ask their students to participate in the **Canada During Covid-19: A Living Archive** project as a class assignment, we've provided a suggested rubric to evaluate students' submissions to the archive.

| Submission criteria | 1–2 points | 3–5 points | 6–8 points | 9–10 points | Total points |
|---|---|---|--|---|---------------------|
| Does the student demonstrate an understanding of primary sources through class discussion and reflection? | Student demonstrates limited understanding of the different types of primary sources and their characteristics. | Student demonstrates some understanding of the different types of primary sources and their characteristics. | Student demonstrates good understanding of the different types of primary sources and their characteristics. | Student demonstrates excellent understanding of the different types of primary sources and their characteristics. | |
| Does the submission demonstrate knowledge of Canadian experiences during COVID-19? | Submission is not relevant to the living archive or to the historical context of Canada during COVID-19. | Submission offers little insight into the Canadian experience during COVID-19. | Submission offers good insight into the Canadian experience during COVID-19. | Submission offers insight into the current historical context and significant insight into the Canadian experience during COVID-19. | |
| Does the submission communicate ideas effectively? E.g., interesting format, use of sound/visuals. | Submission has limited creative elements and communicates ideas poorly. | Submission has some creative elements, but those elements distract from, or do not support, the submission's message/story. | Submission has creative elements that support the message/story. The main message in the submission is clearly communicated. | Submission has many creative elements that support and enhance the message/story. The main message in the submission is clearly communicated. | |
| Does the personal reflection explain the submission? | No personal reflection included or personal reflection does not explain the submission. | Personal reflection partially explains the submission and attempts to connect it to the larger historical context. | Personal reflection clearly explains the submission. | Personal reflection adds depth and provides insight into the thinking behind the submission. | |
| | | | | Total | /40 |