Portail de l'éducation de Historica Canada

Orphans

Overview

This lesson is based on viewing the Heritage Minute, "Orphans," that tells the story of the Québec families who adopted Irish orphans in the 1850's.

Aims

Students will learn more about the experiences and histories of immigrants in Canada by interviewing people in the community and classmates. They will also discuss ways to make immigrants feel welcome in their new homes.

Students will research the history of various immigrant groups in Canada, and discuss the relationship between Canada's national identity and the maintenance of a multicultural society.

Activities

1. Living in a New Land

Most Canadian classrooms include children who were not born in

Canada. Many of their experiences have been shared by generations of new Canadians.

- Interview adults who came to Canada about their first experiences in Canada. Why did they come to Canada? Who helped them find work and shelter? What were their first jobs? What did they do in the country they left? What struggles did they have with language and customs? How did they feel about their new country? What particular problems did they face in Canada, and how did they solve them?

- If possible, invite an older immigrant to tell his or her story to the class. Students should prepare for the presentation by learning something about his or her country of origin and by brainstorming some questions in advance.

- Interview new Canadians in the class to learn their stories or, if they are comfortable enough, have them tell their story to the whole class. You may wish to discuss the similarities in the experiences of older and younger immigrants.

- Discuss ways that you can make new Canadians feel more welcome in the school and the community. Students may also learn about organizations that help new Canadians adjust to their new country.

2. Maintaining the Past

The Irish orphans were allowed to keep their names as part of their personal and cultural identity.

- How do immigrant groups keep their cultural roots alive? Find examples.

- Discuss the question "Can Canada have a united national identity while it is a multicultural society?"

3. Our Multicultural Roots

The Irish are only one group of immigrants to face hardships coming to Canada. As a nation of immigrants, Canada's history is rich in stories of arrival and settlement.

- Divide the class into groups to learn more about some of the immigrant groups who have come to Canada. Among the many distinct groups are Doukhabours, Hutterites, Mennonites, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Chinese, Japanese, Haitians, Vietnamese, Sikhs, European Jews, Ugandan Asians, Salvadoreans, West Indians, and Italians.

- For each group, answer these questions. When did most of the immigrants come to Canada? Why did they come? What conditions were they leaving behind? What particular problems did they face in coming to Canada and settling here? How did they solve those problems? What contribution have they made to Canadian society? Have they preserved any of their cultural traditions in Canada?

Resources

- Heritage Minute: Orphans

- Passages to Canada Speakers Bureau