

An Exhibition in the Classroom - Explore the Site with Your Students



Pedagogical Intent

Students explore the society and culture of the Canadian Confederation Generation by examining clothing worn by people at that time and comparing that clothing with what young people wear today. Students develop their understanding of the present through an inquiry into the past as they discuss clothes as artifacts, analyze ways that clothes and identity are connected, view clothes from the past, examine differences and similarities in clothes of the past and present, and create a museum exhibit of today's clothes for students in the 22nd century.

Subjects

History, History and Citizenship, Language Arts, Social Studies, Visual Arts

Themes

Culture and community, citizenship and identity, change and continuity

Skills and Competencies

Critical thinking and creative thinking, historical thinking, visual and written literacy, questioning, using primary sources, using information, research, examining social phenomena from a historical perspective, interpreting social phenomena using the historical method

Duration

100 to 120 minutes

Lesson 1, Grades 5 to 8

Grades 5 to 8 (all provinces and territories except Quebec);
Elementary Cycle 3, Secondary Cycle 1 (Quebec)

Clothes as Historical Artifacts

Teacher Preparation

Familiarize yourself with the contents of the Canadian Dress: The Confederation Generation Online Exhibition [[Please add website link here](#)].

Prepare student copies of the Activity Sheet: My Clothing Artifact for Students in the 22nd Century (at the end of this lesson).

Students will need access to computers with an Internet connection to view clothes at the Canadian Dress: The Confederation Generation Online Exhibition website and to complete some of the website's jigsaw puzzles and matching games. You could set aside approximately 20 to 30 minutes for this part of the lesson.





Procedure

1. Begin with a classroom discussion about artifacts.

Ask students if they know what artifacts are (objects that have been made by people). Then suggest that students look around the classroom and brainstorm some of the artifacts they see. Remind them that their clothes are also artifacts.

Then discuss with students the following questions and encourage them to add their own questions:

- How do the artifacts around you help you understand how young people live today?
- If some of those artifacts were part of a museum collection in the 22nd century, what would they tell students of that time about your lives?
- How would your artifacts help students of the future understand who you are?

2. Explore the connection between clothes and identity.

Ask students to think about the clothes they are wearing now. In small groups or as a class, ask students to discuss the following questions:

- Why did you choose the clothes you are wearing today?
- What image of yourself did you want others to see? How does your choice of clothes reflect your identity?
- Where does the idea of fashionable clothing come from? Who decides what is in style?
- Why do clothing styles matter? How much of people's identity is reflected by the clothes they wear?

Suggest to students that they keep track of any additional questions they have about clothes and identity.

3. View clothing artifacts at the Confederation Generation website.

Ask students how historical artifacts, like those in the Museum of Civilization, might help them understand the way people lived in the past. Remind students that artifacts can be a window on the past. In this activity, students view clothes that were made in the past and worn by people of that time.

Suggest to students that they visit the Canadian Dress: The Confederation Generation Online Exhibition and look through the various clothing artifacts included in that exhibition. As they view the clothes, invite students to think about how those clothes might give them clues about the people of that time.



4. Analyze differences and similarities between past and present clothes.

As students view the clothes in the Canadian Dress: The Confederation Generation Online Exhibition, ask them to jot down notes about how those clothes are similar to and different from the kind of clothes people wear today.

- How are the clothes worn by young people in the past similar to those worn by young people today?
- How are the clothes from the past different from those worn by young people today?
- How are the clothes worn by young women of the Confederation Generation different from those worn by young men?
- What are the differences between young women's and young men's clothes today?

5. Look for clues in jigsaw puzzles.

To help students look for clues that will help them understand what clothes meant to people in the past, you could suggest that they complete one of the jigsaw puzzles in the Games section of the Online Exhibition. Jigsaw puzzles can be especially useful for visual and kinesthetic learners.

As students complete their puzzles, suggest that they keep their objective in mind: they are looking in the details of those clothes for information about how the Confederation Generation lived.

6. Create a museum display for the 22nd century.

Ask students to create a classroom museum exhibit of clothes worn by young people today. Suggest to students that they imagine their exhibit will be stored away until the 22nd century when it will be put on display at the Museum of Civilization. The purpose of the exhibit is to help students of the future understand what will then be a past generation.

You may want to have students work with a partner or in a small group as they research and complete their portion of this exhibit.

Give each student a copy of the activity sheet for this lesson: My Clothing Artifact for Students in the 22nd Century. Students will include a photograph or drawing of their clothing artifact or of themselves wearing that artifact.

Tell students that they will need to decide which item of clothing they will include and be able to explain why they selected that item. Remind students that people in the future may not know anything else about them, so they will need to leave a written record explaining the use of the artifact and what it meant to people today.



The label for the artifact should include the name of the article of clothing, the date it was added to the museum's collection, the name and age of the person who owned it and contributed the photograph or drawing, and where in Canada that person lived.

The Additional Information section could include further information about the artifact — e.g., where it was made, what it is made from, why it was selected for the museum, and how it will help people in the future understand society and identity in the early 21st century. Suggest that students' labels and additional information should answer questions that their 22nd century viewers are likely to have about the artifact and about the life of the person who wore it.

Extension Activities

Asking questions about artifacts as a historian

You may want to spend some time discussing how and why historians need to ask many questions as they research what happened in the past. You could start by having students ask basic questions about one of the clothing artifacts in the museum's collection: Who wore it? What is it? Where was it worn? When was it worn and why? How was it worn or how was it made?

Then work with students to develop more in-depth questions about clothing as artifacts. For example, what do these clothes tell us about the way some people lived in the past? Whose clothing is not represented in the collection? Why not? How does a museum select items for an online exhibition? Where can people find out more about clothing of this time period?

How clothes are made and who makes them

As a way of comparing one economic aspect of clothing, you could discuss with students the difference between clothing made during the time of the Confederation Generation and today. Tell students that some women of that generation made their own clothes and the clothes of their family. What would that have meant for women's lives? How much time would it have taken to keep their family clothed? What skills would have been needed to make those clothes? And what materials would they have used? Where would those materials likely have come from?

Then ask students who made the clothes they are wearing today. Where did their clothes come from? Were they made in Canada or in another country? If another country, which one? What materials were used in making their clothes? Where would those materials have come from?



Connecting uniforms and identity

You may want to explore with students the connection between official uniforms and identity. Ask students to name some of the people who wear specific uniforms (e.g., police officers; fire fighters; members of the military; bus drivers; airline pilots, stewards and stewardesses). What are the main features of such uniforms? What purpose does a uniform serve in these cases?

After students have explored the rationale for official uniforms, you could extend the discussion. If official uniforms are worn by people in a particular group as a means of identification, what about people who follow particular fashion trends so as to be identifiable as members of particular groups?

Choosing artifacts for a museum

Students may be interested in exploring how curators select artifacts for a museum collection and for public display. Explain that a curator not only collects artifacts but also makes sure they are carefully preserved and accompanied by correct information (e.g., where the artifact was found, who owned it, how and where it was made, what was it made of, and how it was used). Remind students that artifacts from the past can be valuable primary sources for interpreting the past.

You could ask students what kind of museum they think would help young people today understand how people lived in the past. Then suggest that they brainstorm the kinds of questions they would ask if they were curators of that museum and had to decide which artifacts should be included in their museum.



Activity Sheet — My Clothing Artifact for Students in the 22nd Century



Title: _____

Identification number: _____

Object Type: _____

Manufactured date: _____

Collection date: _____

Owned by: _____

Copyright: _____

Artist/maker/Manufacturer: _____

Place of manufacture or origin: _____

Measurements: _____

Fabric: _____

Colour: _____

Description: _____

Additional details: _____