

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 accessories used by people at that time and comparing those accessories with what young people use today. Firstly, students brainstorm and discuss current accessories. Then they view accessories from the Confederation Generation and complete concept maps to describe selected present-day and historical accessories. Finally, students investigate change and continuity by comparing past and present accessories.

Subjects

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

Themes

Change and continuity, culture and community, citizenship and identity

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

90 to 120 minutes

Lesson 2, Grades 5 to 8

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

Accessories and Culture

Teacher Preparation

Familiarize yourself with the contents of the Canadian Dress: The Confederation Generation Online Exhibition (www.civilization.ca/confederationdress).

Prepare student copies of the activity sheets at the end of this lesson. Note that students will need two copies of the Accessory Concept Map (page 1), one copy for a current accessory and one copy for a Confederation Generation accessory. Pages 2 and 3 of the activity sheets for this lesson include a selection of accessories from the Online Exhibition.

If your students are going to view accessories at the Canadian Dress: The Confederation Generation Online Exhibition website





or complete some of the website’s jigsaw puzzles and matching games, they will need access to computers with an Internet connection for 15 to 30 minutes.

Procedure

1. Explore present-day accessories.

Introduce this lesson about accessories from the Confederation Generation by asking students to brainstorm some of the accessories that young people wear and use today. Remind students that, when applied to clothing, the word “accessory” means something that is worn or carried by people but is not part of their main clothing.

Once students have listed accessories with which they are familiar (e.g., scarves, gloves, backpacks, hats, earrings, rings, watches, wallets, purses, ties, shoes, belts, cell phones), ask them to respond to the following questions. You could have students think/pair/share this stage of the lesson or they could hold small group discussions. Encourage students to add their own questions as they move along.

- What accessories do you usually wear or use?
- Why do you wear or use those accessories? What do they mean to you?
- What is your favourite accessory? Why?
- Do you choose your accessories to show you belong to a particular group? Or do you choose accessories that set you apart from the group?
- What do people’s choices of accessories tell you about their identity?

2. Use a concept map to explore present-day accessories.

Distribute two copies of the Accessory Concept Map (see Activity Sheets, page 1 at the end of this lesson) to each student. Explain to students that they will use one concept map to describe one of their own accessories and explain what it means to them. Then, after they have investigated accessories at the Canadian Dress: The Confederation Generation Online Exhibition, they will use the second concept map to investigate an accessory from the past.

Suggest to students that, in their first concept map, they draw a picture of one of their own favourite accessories in the node marked Accessory. Then ask students to respond to the questions in the other nodes on the map.



You may want to model responses to the concept-map questions for students.

- Who uses or wears it? (e.g., a cell phone — men and women, people of all ages)
- Why is it worn or used? (e.g., a watch is used to keep track of time, a backpack is used to carry books and other items)
- Where is it worn or used? (e.g., a cell phone may be used in most places but not in school or movie theatres)
- Where does it come from and what is it made of? (e.g., a scarf may come from China and be made of silk)
- What does it say about the person who wears or uses it? (e.g., a hockey team tie may identify the wearer as a member of a particular team)
- Who doesn't wear or use it? (e.g., some types of purses may not be used by men)
- When students have completed their concept map, briefly discuss how their accessories reflect a particular place at a particular time. Ask students to work with a partner to suggest clues that their accessories might give people a hundred years from now. How might current accessories help people in the future understand not just today's fashions but also today's society, culture, attitudes, and values?

3. Review some key points from the Online Exhibition.

Before students work on their second concept map to describe a Confederation Generation accessory, you may want to review with them some ideas from the Online Exhibition.

- What society expected of Confederation Generation men and women was quite different from what society expects today. Middle-class women were expected to stay within their home and family, in their separate and “proper” sphere. A woman's clothing and accessories could be quite elaborate and colourful because they reflected the status of the woman's family.
- Accessories for middle-class men reflected their sphere in life too. These men had authority over politics, business, banking, and the family. Their clothing reflected that position in society; their suits were sober and usually of a dark colour. But their waistcoats (vests) and neckties could be more colourful. Men's accessories might include pocket watches and top hats for formal occasions.
- As styles of women's dress changed during this period, some accessories also changed. For example, when skirts became wider and women's overcoats no longer fit over the skirts, shawls came into fashion. Also, women wore hats whenever they left home, and the styles of hats changed as the details



of their dresses changed. By the 1850s, hats could be very elaborate with decorations of lace, flowers, feathers, ribbons, and even stuffed birds.

- A variety of accessories were available to people across Canada at this time because of industrialization and international trade. Also, the railway across Canada, completed in 1885, meant that people in many regions of the country could now receive goods of all kinds.

4. View accessories of the Confederation Generation.

Remind students that accessories are artifacts that can provide clues about how people lived in the past. Then invite students to explore some accessories that were worn and used by people of the Confederation Generation.

You could suggest to students that they visit the Canadian Dress: The Confederation Generation Online Exhibition and view the accessories shown there. Or you could distribute Selected Confederation Generation Accessories (see Activity Sheets, pages 2 and 3 at the end of this lesson). These pages contain visuals of a few of the accessories shown in the Online Exhibition.

Ask students to select one Confederation Generation accessory that interests them and use the second copy of their Accessory Concept Map to help them look for clues about how and why people in the past might have used that accessory. Tell students that they can find more information about these accessories in the Online Exhibition.

5. Look for clues in jigsaw puzzles and matching games.

To help students focus on details and look for clues that could help them understand what accessories meant to people in the past, suggest that they explore the matching games and jigsaw puzzles in the Games section of the Canadian Dress: The Confederation Generation Online Exhibition. Jigsaw puzzles can be especially useful for visual and kinesthetic learners.

As students work on their matches and puzzles, suggest that they keep their objective in mind: they are looking at the details of accessories for clues about how the Confederation Generation lived.

6. Inquire: change and continuity in accessories.

Once students have completed their two concept maps, hold a class discussion on the differences and similarities of accessories in the past and in the present.

Encourage students to consider social and cultural aspects of accessories in their discussion. You could start off with the following questions but encourage students to expand the inquiry by adding their own questions.



- How do the accessories of a time reflect the society of that time?
- How might accessories express the culture and values of a particular community?
- How do differences in accessories over time reflect changes in society over time?
- How do similarities in accessories over time reflect continuity in society over time?

Extension Activities

Visit a town in the past

To give students a feel for one of the communities in which some people lived during the Confederation Generation, you could invite them to visit the online tour of the Museum of Civilization’s Canada Hall. The exhibit and tour includes Ontario Town Life: a street scene from a small town in Ontario in 1885.

Students can view still shots of the recreation of the town site. (<http://www.civilization.ca/cmcc/exhibitions/hist/canp1/ca19eng.shtml>) or they can wander through the streets and look into shop windows using Views A and B, Ontario Town Life at the Canada Hall Virtual Tour website. (<http://www.civilization.ca/cmcc/exhibitions/hist/canp1/qtvr/caqtvr1e.shtml>)

As students visit the town, ask them to imagine what it might have felt like to walk on those streets and look in those shop windows dressed in the clothes of that time. When students finish their tour, you could ask them: Why do you think that museums create such exhibits? How might such reconstructions help visitors understand how people lived in the past?

Write a diary entry

You could ask students to write a diary entry about one of the accessories they own. Explain that their entry could accompany the artifact in a museum of the future and would help museum visitors understand how that accessory was used in the 21st century. Remind students that historians use both artifacts and documents to try to understand how people lived in the past.

For example, students could write their diary entry about their backpacks. They could focus on an event that involved the backpack or a story that traces its history — where it came from, who made it, why it was chosen, where it has travelled, and/or how it is used. Some students may choose to write their entry in the voice of the backpack itself.

If students completed an Accessory Concept Map for a modern accessory, they could use that map as the basis for their diary entry.



Continuity and Change: Men's Top Hats

Students may be aware that many accessories during the time of the Confederation Generation were quite different from accessories today, but they may not be quite so aware that some accessories — men's top hats, for example — have evolved over a long period of time.

Remind students that the fur trade in North America during the 16th and 17th centuries was built on the European market for beaver pelts which were used for making hats. During the first half of the 19th century, men wore top hats made from beaver felt which was durable and waterproof. By 1850, beaver felt began to be replaced by silk. As reminders of the importance of the beaver in Canadian history, invite students to look at the back of a 5¢ coin or to view the coats of arms of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, or of the city of Montreal.

Ask students to work together to create a flow chart or a mind map to illustrate ways that the market for beaver felt — the fur trade — changed the lives of many people in North America and beyond. You could also ask students to suggest a natural resource — oil, for example — that is currently in demand and to create a flow chart or mind map to show how the demand for that resource affects the lives of people in countries around the world.

Selling Accessories: then and now

Ask students if they ever use catalogues — print or online — to select and buy accessories. What are some benefits or advantages of buying items in this way? What are some of the costs or disadvantages?

To give students an idea of the content of catalogues in the late 19th century, you could print out a selection of pages from *The Delineator: A Journal of Fashion, Culture and Fine Arts*.

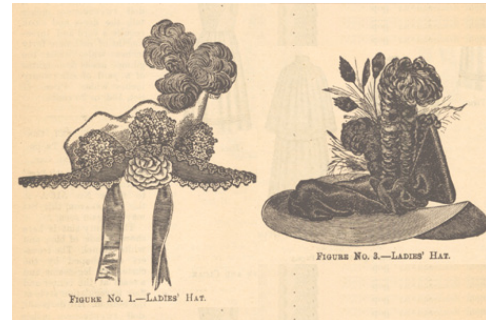
(www.civilization.ca/confederationdress/delineator) This Canadian catalogue was published for Butterick (1873-1937), a company that made and sold patterns for clothing. Suggest that as students view the intended for and what kinds of products were included. You could also ask students how the completion of pages, they think about whom the catalogue was the cross-country railway in 1885 might have affected catalogue sales in Canada.



Activity Sheet 2 : Selected Confederation Generation Accessories



Paisley wool shawl worn by Jane Spencer in London, Canada West, Ontario, circa 1840



Women's hats samples from *The Delineator: A Journal of Fashion, Culture and Fine Arts*, November 1892 (page 482)



Graduate nurse's chatelaine (a decorative pin) to be attached to a uniform and used to carry penknife, pen, thermometer holder, matches, pencil, Toronto General Hospital, early 20th century



Mourning ring engraved "In Memory of N.S." and worn by Mrs. Nicholas Sparks of Ottawa after her husband's death in 1862. Locks of his hair are woven around the ring.

