

Developing understanding through images and documents

Why did European immigrants come to Canada?

CRITICAL CHALLENGE

Select three important questions about the reasons why European immigrants decided to come to Canada in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and about the possible challenges they may have faced.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, students examine immigration posters created in the late 1800s and early 1900s that were used to convince Europeans to immigrate to Canada. As a class, students create an initial list of questions they have about the messages conveyed in the posters. They investigate additional immigration posters, make further observations and draw inferences about these messages. Students use the criteria met by an important question to generate and refine their list of questions. They then select and share three important questions about the reasons why immigrants may have come to Canada and the challenges they may have faced. The lesson concludes with students reflecting on the reasons why European immigrants came to Canada despite possibly having similar questions or concerns.

OBJECTIVES

Broad understanding

Knowledge that Canadian immigration posters may have influenced European immigrants' decision to come to Canada

Requisite tools

Background knowledge

- knowledge of the factors that contributed to increased European immigration to Canada between 1891 and 1914
- knowledge of the messages used to attract European immigrants to Canada

Criteria for judgment

- criteria used to determine whether a question is important
 - helps us understand something we find confusing
 - looks for answers we don't already know
 - asks for more information about interesting or key ideas



Critical thinking vocabulary

- primary sources
- observation
- inference



Thinking strategies

- asking questions
- making observations
- drawing inferences



Habits of mind

- inquiry-minded
- empathetic



MATERIALS

Briefing sheet

Understanding European immigration to Canada, 1891–1914 (Briefing sheet #3)

Activity sheet

Selecting important questions (Activity sheet #A-1)

Source documents

Canada: The Most Fertile Country in the World (poster) (Source document #A-1)

Free Farms for the Million (poster) (Source document #A-2)

Canada West: The Last Best West (poster) (Source document #A-3)

North Atlantic Trading Company advertising card (Source document #A-4)

Western Canada: The New Eldorado (poster) (Source document #A-5)

Background information for teachers

For more information on European immigration to Canada, consider reading *Background information for teachers: European immigration to Canada, 1891–1914* (Briefing sheet #1) prior to teaching this lesson. These notes are intended to support teachers with historical details related to the content of this lesson and are not intended for student use.

Generate initial ideas

Suggested Activities

1. Display or provide copies of the poster *Canada: The Most Fertile Country in the World* (Source document #A-1) and the *North Atlantic Trading Company* advertising card (Source document #A-4) for students to consider. Post the translation of the advertising card for students to read and refer to. Translated into English, the card says that 160 acres (the area of a homestead) equals 130 Austrian morgs of free lands for every settler. The white banner proclaims that 200 million acres are under cultivation in western Canada. The back of the card contains a map showing sea routes from Europe to Canada.
2. Divide students into pairs or small groups for easier viewing. Ask students to examine the images carefully and to use details from the poster and card to suggest when and why each was created.
3. Invite students to discuss and share their initial thinking. Encourage students to use clues from the poster and card to guide their suggestions.
4. Inform students that posters and advertising cards such as these were used to encourage and invite people in other countries to immigrate to Canada. Pose the question: “What might we learn about why early immigrants came to Canada by looking at sources such as these advertisements?”
5. Ask students to suggest what conditions and reasons might lead people from other countries to consider leaving their home countries for Canada. Remind students to use details from the poster and card to help think of possible conditions and reasons. Record student suggestions for use later in this lesson.
6. Share the lesson challenge with students: *Select three important questions about the reasons why European immigrants decided to come to Canada in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and about the possible challenges they may have faced.*



Develop initial questions

1. Prompt students to revisit the poster and advertisement they viewed at the beginning of the lesson: *Canada: The Most Fertile Country in the World* (Source document #A-1) and the *North Atlantic Trading Company* advertising card (Source document #A-4). Ask students to create an initial list of questions they have about what they observe in the posters. Student questions may include:
 - Who created these advertisements?
 - Why were they created?
 - Who were these advertisements created for?
 - What are the most noticeable differences between the advertisements?
 - Why would the advertisements be so different in design?
 - Why is one of the advertisements in a different language?
 - Why would people want to leave their home countries?
 - Who was giving away this land?
 - Do you think that the land was actually free?
 - Was the land free because there was something wrong with it?
 - Where was the land?
 - Where were the nearest towns and cities?
 - Did Canada really have the best land for farming?
2. Begin a class chart or list of the questions generated in this activity for students to view and revisit, and to which they can add additional questions as these arise during the lesson. Invite students to suggest and discuss possible answers to these questions.
3. Explain to students that these posters were created in the late 1800s and early 1900s to convince people in European countries to move to Canada. Some advertisements were produced by the Canadian government, while others were created by transportation companies under contract to the government. The posters and advertising cards were distributed to potential immigrants in several ways: they were printed in newspapers, posted on the sides of motorized advertising wagons, or distributed as pamphlets by horse-drawn wagons. Gatherings such as country fairs and exhibitions were prime locations where these materials were handed out to crowds of visitors.
4. Pose the question: “What messages were used to encourage people to come to Canada?” Sample responses may include:
 - They could have free farms.
 - Canada has the best land in the world.
 - Canada has friendly people.
 - There is land for them to grow crops.

Examine an additional poster

5. Ask students to share additional questions they might have about the messages used to convince people to immigrate to Canada. For example, students might question the poster message describing Canada as having friendly people. Other important questions that relate to this message could include:
 - Were all Canadians friendly to the people immigrating?
 - How were new European immigrants treated by the people who already lived here when they arrived in Canada?
 - What help or support was given to new immigrants?
6. Add any other questions raised by students to the list of initial questions created earlier in the lesson.

1. Display or distribute copies of *Western Canada: The New Eldorado* (Source document #A-5) for students to view.
2. Invite students to make initial observations about the images and messages on the poster. Encourage students to consider both the text and the illustrations when making their observations.
3. Clarify the meaning of “observation” for students if necessary. Explain that an observation is something they can actually see (or in other contexts hear, smell, taste, touch). Students should be able to point to what they observe on the poster.
4. Draw student attention to the phrase “the new Eldorado.” Clarify for students that Eldorado was a legendary city that sixteenth-century explorers believed would have riches, gold, and treasures waiting for them when it was discovered.
5. Ask students to share their initial observations about the messages on the poster with a partner and then with the class.



Identify messages

1. Pose the question: “What riches or advantages were described on these three posters in order to convince people to come and live in Canada?” Ensure that students understand that the riches in this case are not actual gold or money. It may be helpful to explain that riches can also be thought of as advantages or reasons for coming to Canada. Sample responses may include:
 - wheat
 - sunny weather/warm climate
 - freedom
 - good soil for growing crops

2. Encourage them to again consider both the images and text when creating their list of messages.
3. Prompt students to consider what might have been so appealing about these posters for European immigrants. Student suggestions may include:
 - bigger farms
 - free land
 - protection from the government
 - owning a home
 - good land for growing crops
 - warm and sunny weather
4. Prompt students to share the details from the poster that support their thinking. For example, if a student suggests “good land for growing crops,” ask which specific detail led them to suggest this advantage.
5. Create a chart titled *Advertised advantages of living in Canada* and record the advantages identified by students for use later in this lesson.
6. Prompt students to share further questions they may have about the messages being used to convince people to immigrate to Canada. Add any new questions to the class list created at the beginning of this lesson.
7. If students have difficulty generating questions, or you wish to have a longer list of questions for students to draw from, repeat the previous activities with one or more of the additional posters provided in this lesson.

Consider other messages

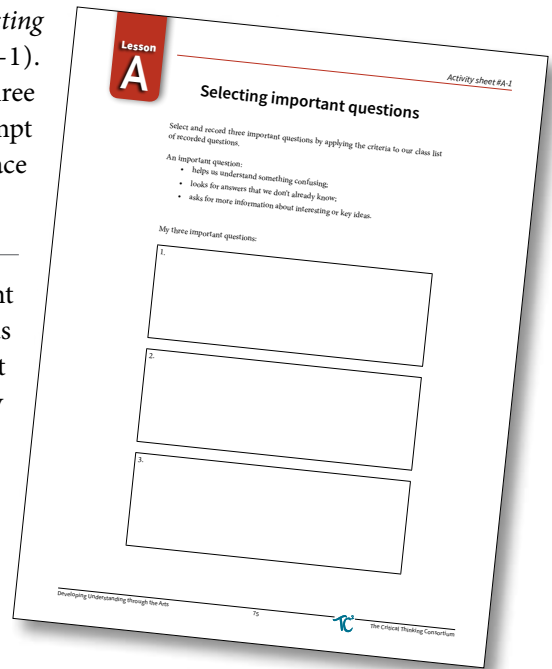
1. Encourage students to review the list of advertised messages and the advantages that they have collected.
2. Prompt students to suggest what conditions might have “pulled” or “pushed” European immigrants from their home countries to begin a new life in Canada. For example, if immigrants were pulled by the promise of land, it may suggest that they were pushed from their home country by expensive or scarce land.

Identify important questions

1. Remind students of the critical challenge for the lesson: *Select three important questions about the reasons why European immigrants decided to come to Canada in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and about the possible challenges they may have faced.*
2. Prompt students to review the questions they have generated as a class throughout the lesson.
3. Ask students to suggest one question that would be important in helping them learn more about why Europeans immigrated to Canada and about the challenges they faced in their home countries or after they arrived in Canada.

Consider possible reasons for immigration

4. Invite them to suggest criteria to help determine whether a question is important or not. Share the criteria met by an important question. An important question:
 - helps us understand something we find confusing;
 - looks for answers that we don't already know; and
 - asks for more information about interesting or key ideas.
5. Apply the criteria as a class and identify one question that does and one that doesn't meet the criteria.
6. Provide each student with a copy of *Selecting important questions* (Activity sheet #A-1). Instruct students to use the criteria to select three important questions from the class list. Prompt students to record their questions in the space provided on the activity sheet.



1. Invite students to share the three important questions they selected in small groups or as a whole class. Encourage students to suggest what questions might have been asked by European immigrants thinking about coming to Canada.
2. Pose the question: “Why might European immigrants have still wanted to come to Canada even though they may have had similar questions to your own about the messages in the immigration posters?”
3. Invite students to revisit the list of conditions and reasons generated at the beginning of the lesson. Encourage students to suggest how the list might be revised based on what they have discovered during this lesson.
4. Discuss their ideas as a class and explain to students that they will have further opportunities in later lessons to learn more about what life in Canada was like for European immigrants in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Alternatively, you may consider distributing copies of *Understanding European immigration to Canada, 1891–1914* (Briefing sheet #3) for students to use as they reflect on the questions they have generated throughout the lesson.

