

SOUNDS LIKE TORONTO

“Sounding” Canadian

Grade 12: History

Guiding Question: What does “Canadian-ness” sound like? How have structures of power and privilege, including institutional racism and settler colonialism, shaped Canada’s sonic landscape and cultural identity?

Description

This lesson invites students to reflect on the contributions made by various musical artists who have shaped Canada’s musical and cultural landscapes. It asks students to analyse the historical significance of these artists, as well as the social, economic, political, and cultural trends that helped and/or hindered their contributions. The timing, content, and delivery of the following lesson should be shaped according to your timetable, class length, and age of participants. Please make adjustments, edits, and/or additions as you and your students see fit.

Materials: Computers, projector, whiteboard, speakers, handouts

Introduction/Minds On

1. Rapid Writing: Set a 1-2 minute timer and ask students to generate a list of Canadian musical artists they believe have had a significant impact in shaping Canada’s cultural identity.
2. Create a master list by recording students’ suggestions on the black/whiteboard or by inviting students to share responses via PollEverywhere, Padlet, or other smartphone applications.
3. Ask students to reflect on the master in pairs or small groups. What patterns do they notice? (E.g. Are the artists listed from particular time periods or geographical areas? To what extent do the artists reflect Canada’s racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity?)
 - a. How did they decide which artists to include on their lists? What historical forces might account for their selections and the patterns they’ve identified? (E.g. the rise of streaming platforms, the memorializing of particular artists in popular media, etc.) Invite students to share their responses in order to generate a full class discussion.
4. As a further provocation, ask students to reflect on which of these artists they would commission-and they may only choose one, living or deceased--to write/perform/contribute a song for Canada’s next milestone anniversary. Which of these artists, in other words, “sounds” distinctly Canadian? Students may discuss or write down their reflections.

Body/Action

1. Tell students that [Gordon Lightfoot](#) was commissioned by the Canadian Broadcast Corporation (CBC) to write and perform a song commemorating Canada's centennial anniversary in 1967. Play "Canadian Railroad Trilogy," and, if possible, project the song's lyrics. Ask students to draw on prior knowledge to identify the song's subject (the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway). What vision of Canadian identity does this song memorialize? What aspects of Canadian history and cultural identity are omitted (e.g. the Chinese head tax, residential schools)? Discuss.
2. Ask students to consider why Gordon Lightfoot was chosen to write and perform the centennial anthem. Record their ideas on the board. Tell students that they will be conducting online research about Lightfoot's career to test their working theories. They will also explore other artists' contributions and historical legacies, including any artists appearing on the class-generated list who are also featured on the Sounds Like Toronto website.
3. Distribute Handout 1 and direct students to the Sounds Like Toronto website. Working independently, in pairs, or in small groups, students will explore the artist profiles to make assessments about each artist's historical significance. They should also note any social, economic, political, or cultural factors that may have helped and/or hindered each artist's careers and historical legacies (e.g. support from institutions like the CBC, access to particular venues and audiences, barriers due to particular attitudes/beliefs/practices, etc.). Students may consult additional sources if necessary, which they should also cite.
4. Invite students to share their findings in pairs or small groups.
5. Ask students to discuss which of the artists they researched (living or deceased) would be an ideal candidate to pen Canada's next commemorative anthem. To what extent can Canada's "sound" be captured by a single artist or song? What aspects of Canadian history or identity would such a song highlight or memorialize?

Consolidation

Students will use the information they gathered to nominate one artist to write and perform Canada's next commemorative anthem. Students can defend their choices orally or in writing, with individuals or pairs/small groups representing each artist up for consideration. They should draw on evidence gathered from the Sounds Like Toronto website and other sources to make a compelling case for their artist's cultural significance and enduring historical legacy. This activity can be organized as a mock committee meeting, where members of the CBC Board of Directors propose nominations, offer evidence to support their selections (including media artefacts, where appropriate), and then vote on a winning artist. Students may also write formal position papers to defend their choices, using appropriate citations to document their sources of information.

Extension

Students can write lyrics to their own commemorative songs, drawing on prior knowledge or additional research.

Assessment

This lesson may be formally or informally assessed. Teachers may adapt the following rubric to assess the mock board meeting and/or position papers. Teachers may also invite students to help generate assessment criteria.

Criteria	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Knowledge Describes the contributions of various individuals and groups, including ethnocultural and regional groups Explains the contributions of various individuals to Canadian society and politics during this period				
Thinking Uses the concepts of historical thinking (i.e., historical significance, cause and consequence, continuity and change, and historical perspective) when analysing, evaluating evidence about, and formulating conclusions and/or judgements regarding historical issues, events, and/or developments in Canadian history Interprets and analyses evidence and information relevant to their investigations, using various tools, strategies, and approaches appropriate for historical inquiry				

<p>Communication</p> <p>Communicates their ideas, arguments, and conclusions using various formats and styles, as appropriate for the audience and purpose</p>				
<p>Application</p> <p>Analyses key social/cultural trends and developments in Canada during this period, including changes in social attitudes/values Selects and organize relevant evidence and information on aspects of Canadian history from a variety of primary and secondary sources</p>				

CURRICULUM

We have listed CHI4U curriculum expectations below; however, this work could easily be adapted for other grades and/or subjects.

A1. Historical Inquiry: use the historical inquiry process and the concepts of historical thinking when investigating aspects of Canadian history, with a focus on the development of identity and culture;

A1.2 select and organize relevant evidence and information on aspects of Canadian history from a variety of primary and secondary sources

A1.4 interpret and analyse evidence and information relevant to their investigations, using various tools, strategies, and approaches appropriate for historical inquiry

A1.6 use the concepts of historical thinking (i.e., historical significance, cause and consequence, continuity and change, and historical perspective) when analysing, evaluating evidence about, and formulating conclusions and/or judgements regarding historical issues, events, and/or developments in Canadian history

A1.7 evaluate and synthesize their findings to formulate conclusions and/or make informed judgements or predictions about the issues, events, and/or developments they are investigating

A1.8 communicate their ideas, arguments, and conclusions using various formats and styles, as appropriate for the audience and purpose

E1. Setting the Context: analyse various social/cultural, economic, and political events, trends, and/or developments in Canada since 1945 and their impact on the development of the country

E1.1 analyse key social/cultural trends and developments in Canada during this period, including changes in social attitudes/values

E1.2 analyse efforts by the Canadian government to promote and protect Canadian culture during this period

E1.3 analyse ways in which technological and/or scientific developments during this period have contributed to the development of identity in Canada

E3. Diversity and Citizenship: analyse how various individuals and groups have contributed to the development of identity, culture, and citizenship in Canada since 1945

E3.1 explain the contributions of various individuals to Canadian society and politics during this period

E3.4 describe the contributions of various individuals and groups, including ethnocultural and regional groups

Handout 1: Charting Artistic Legacies

Consult the Sounds Like Toronto website to complete the following chart. For each artist, note significant contributions, as well as any social, economic, political, or cultural factors that helped and/or hindered their artistic careers and legacies.

Artist	Historical Significance	Helping Factors	Hindering Factors
Gordon Lightfoot			
Archie Alleyne			

Buffy Sainte- Marie			
Drake			
Jeremy Dutcher			

Jessie Reyez			
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