

# ANTHEM: Expressions of Canadian Identity

*Lesson Plan for Grades 9-12, prepared by the Canadian Language Museum*

**CLASS LENGTH: 60 minutes**

## OVERVIEW

This lesson is designed to use artworks from *ANTHEM: Expressions of Canadian Identity* to facilitate discussion about the meaning and construction of Canadian identity. Students will work individually and in groups to explore differences in the perception of Canadian identity, and reflect on different methods of political expression.

**Note:** It may be useful to read the artists' biographies on the *ANTHEM* website in order to help guide students' thinking.

## ONTARIO CURRICULUM GOALS

This lesson was designed to meet curriculum goals for **Grade 10 Civics CHV20**.

**B1.1** Describe some civic issues of local, national, and/or global significance, and compare the perspectives of different groups on selected issues.

**C1.2** Describe a variety of ways in which they could make a civic contribution at the local, national, and/or global level, and assess whether all perspectives are represented or are valued equally.

**C2.3** Describe various ways in which people can access information about civic matters, and assess the effectiveness of ways in which individuals can voice their opinions on these matters.

**Note:** This lesson can also be adapted to meet the Ontario Curriculum standards for various courses in: Geography; History; Politics; Visual Arts; English; First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies; Equity Studies; and General Social Sciences.

## LEARNING GOALS

Students will be able to:

1. Describe some of the many facets of Canadian identity, including how they may differ between social groups.
2. Interpret diverse, artistic expressions of Canadian identity and assess the effectiveness of their methods.
3. Reflect on how they can make an impact in their own communities when voicing their political opinions.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Blackboard, Smartboard, or similar

And either:

- Laptops & access to the *ANTHEM* website

or

- Copies of the exhibition description provided in Appendix A
- Copies of the worksheet provided in Appendix B
- Copies of the exit card provided in Appendix C
- Copies of the artworks and artist statements provided in Appendices D-G

## ACTIVITY

### 1. Hook: Brainstorm Word Cloud (10 mins)

- a. Before the class enters, have the topic “Canadian” written on the board
- b. Ask students what this word means to them - politically, culturally, socially, etc. - and to provide examples of why.
  - i. Possible descriptors include: multicultural, democratic, friendly
  - ii. Encourage students to think critically. Ask them if these traits apply the same to everyone (ex: Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour, immigrants, non-citizens, members of the 2SLGBTQ2+ community, etc.) If not, ask students what new traits this implies (ex: discriminatory, colonial, oppressive).
- c. Remind learners that collective identity is complex, and that both positive and negative traits can be true simultaneously. Emphasize that our actions can change perceptions of what it means to be “Canadian” over time.

### 2. Application: Artwork Analysis (40 mins)

- a. Provide students with copies of the description of the exhibition provided in Appendix A, or project it on the board. Have a student volunteer to read the description aloud.
- b. Split the class into 4 groups. Provide each group with copies of one of the four artworks and corresponding artist statements.
- c. **Minds On:** Have students write in silence, jotting notes of their first impressions of the message conveyed by the artwork, instructing them not to look at the artist statement yet. Learners can use the brainstorm on the board to assist them, as well as the four themes listed in the exhibition description. **(5 mins)**
- d. **Compare & Contrast:** Then, have students share their thoughts and interpretations with their group members, noting any similarities or differences. **(5 mins)**

- e. **Look Further:** Now instruct each group to read their artwork's corresponding artist statement. Have students read through the artist statement, and use it to further inform their interpretation. Does it confirm what they thought the artwork conveys? Does it contradict any of their ideas? Do they agree or disagree with the artist's interpretation of Canadian identity, and why? **(10 mins)**
- f. **Summarize:** Have students write a new interpretation of the artwork together, considering all the different ideas that they have read and discussed. **(5 mins)**
- g. **Share:** One student representative from each group will share their group's summary with the rest of the class. Students will take notes on each group's summaries in their worksheet, and ask any questions they may have. Ensure that students pass around copies of the artworks so that everyone can see each one. **(10 mins)**

### **3. Reflection (10 mins)**

- a. Distribute the exit cards amongst the class.
- b. Ask the class: "Were these artworks effective in conveying their intended message? How else can we communicate our opinions to others? Explain your opinions through these exit cards."
- c. If students are struggling with question two, you can provide them with prompts such as:
  - i. What sorts of community groups are you a part of where you can discuss important issues?
  - ii. What impact can we have on the people that we are closest to?
  - iii. Are social media and other online platforms effective for spreading ideas about cultural and politics?



## **APPENDIX A: DESCRIPTION OF *ANTHEM: EXPRESSIONS OF CANADIAN IDENTITY***

*ANTHEM: Expressions of Canadian Identity* is an exhibition hosted by the Canadian Language Museum. It asks a number of artists from across Canada to consider how the national anthem, especially the words “our home and native land,” support or go against our sense of citizenship and national identity. The artworks showcased in this exhibition display diverse interpretations of what being Canadian means to the artists, from positive to negative, and everything in between. They have been categorized into four themes: colonization, migration, language, and land and water.

Questions provoked by this exhibition include:

- Is *O Canada* an appropriate symbol of Canadian identity?
- How does the land we live on inform our identity?
- Who belongs within the Canadian identity?
- How does being Canadian differ depending on one’s own family history of how they have come to live here?
- What happens when being Canadian means something different to everyone?
- Is Canadian identity a source of pride? Should it be?

This exhibition encourages you to ponder these questions, and more, as you examine each unique piece of art. The museum hopes that these artworks encourage you to reflect on and discuss how symbols of identity, such as the national anthem, can evolve alongside our changing societal values.

## APPENDIX B: STUDENT WORKSHEET

*ANTHEM: Expressions of Canadian Identity*

**Activity 1: Class Brainstorm**

*What does "Canadian" mean to you?*

Activity 2: Artwork Analysis	
Part 1: Minds On	Part 2: Compare & Contrast
<i>What are your first impressions of the artwork?</i>	<i>How does your interpretation differ from your group members'?</i>
Part 3: Look Further	Part 4: Summarize
<i>How does the artist statement change your interpretation?</i>	<i>With your group, write a short summary of the meaning of the artwork to share with the class.</i>

Part 5: Share	
Inherited Inarticulations <i>by Jewel Shaw</i>	Songs We Carry, Poems We Hold <i>by Yael Brotman</i>
Turbulent Chroma: The Imperatives of Water and Body <i>by Liz Ingram &amp; Bernd Hildebrandt</i>	Canadian Rocky Mountains Near Jasper, Canada <i>by Karen Dugas</i>

## APPENDIX C: EXIT CARD

# EXIT CARD

Name:

Date:

**1. Do you think that art is an effective way to address the meaning of Canadian identity? Why or why not?**

**2. What are some other methods and platforms we can use to address the issues of Canadian identity?**

**APPENDIX D: *INHERITED INARTICULATIONS* BY JEWEL SHAW**



Jewel Shaw, *Inherited Inarticulations*, 2020, found Bible cover, Gampi tissue paper, sinew, lithography ink and carbon paper transfer drawing, 28 x 56 in.

**Jewel Shaw - Artist Statement:**

Home + Native Land                      displacement, trauma,                      oral histories  
visual story  
memory    telling  
identity  
ancestral homelands                      nomadic seasonal  
inherited    migrations: follow the  
poetry                      translated                      animal  
loss of language, land, home,  
traditions                      interpreted, transmitted                      walking                      grief  
It hurts to breathe.  
Barefoot. Incoherent and clumsy.  
In the distance I see you, stark, bare, indistinct, carrying your traumas.  
Remnants, penetrate.  
Animal breath  
Salivate  
Sinew  
Sludge  
Blood  
Fire.  
Black bibles  
White crosses  
Raven heartbeats  
Missing  
gone



**APPENDIX E: SONGS WE CARRY, POEMS WE HOLD BY Yael BROTMAN**



Yael Brotman, *Songs We Carry, Poems We Hold*, 2020-21, etching, inkjet & stencil on Kurotani paper, wood cabinetry, audio element, 37.5 x 37.5 in.



### **Yael Brotman - Artist Statement**

The title of this exhibition, “Anthem,” evokes the sense of a patriotic song sung loudly and boldly. The audio element of my installation *Songs We Carry, Poems We Hold*, includes sensibilities that are antithetical to loud; they are tender, longing, some even joyous, yet are equally proud. They are lullabies, recitations or traditional songs sung/recited by Canadian young adults in their languages of origin: Arabic, Urdu, Korean, Tagalog, Spanish, Jamaican Patois and others.

Thematically, this installation suggests the ephemeral nature of language. The fragility of remembered songs extends to the culture that is brought with families migrating to Canada (my personal experience). We want to integrate into the big tent while preserving our stories, holidays and love of the topography of home. Our children walk the fertile line of hyphenated identities.

The young people involved in this project were invited to sing or recite a song/poem that speaks of that love of their land of origin. The English translation of each song/poem appears in the colophon lying in the large cavity of the book casing. The print hanging above the book casing was initially folded like a map and sat atop the colophon. The concept of ephemerality versus solidity is further enhanced through the imagistic references and materiality of the print.

APPENDIX F: *TURBULENT CHROMA: THE IMPERATIVES OF WATER AND BODY*  
BY LIZ INGRAM & BERND HILDEBRANT



Liz Ingram and Bernd Hildebrandt, *Turbulent Chroma: Imperatives of Water and Body*, 2013, lithography, inkjet, letterpress relief, chine collé, 24 x 360 in.



### Artist Statement - Liz Ingram & Bernd Hildebrandt

We are both child immigrants, born and raised in other countries by parents of divergent histories who experienced extreme tragedy and suffering on opposite ideological sides of World War II. Now we are Canadian citizens - by choice. We are grateful for Canada's diversity, and for the many generations of peoples that have sought to live in unity with this land. Our work is an attempt to build upon and live up to that heritage.

Together we view a particular place/lake/stream in the Boreal forest of Alberta, with a long unrecorded history of community and sustenance, as our grounding site in a turbulent world. Through words and images we wish to connect the viewer to a strong sense of our place in/as nature, and to instill a sense of personal engagement and responsibility to those special, pristine places that we are losing to our highly virtual and technological world. There is embodied excitement when we can feel our oneness, exhilaration and vulnerability within nature. As a species we are discovering the fragility of this relationship, as well as our vulnerability within this world. We hope our work will give the viewer an experience that will amplify care and love for our shared and precious natural resources and spaces.



**APPENDIX G: CANADIAN ROCKY MOUNTAINS NEAR JASPER, CANADA BY KAREN DUGAS**



Karen Dugas, *Canadian Rocky Mountains Near Jasper, Canada*, 2020, digital print, 12 x 120 in.

**Artist Statement - Karen Dugas**

The photographs used in this work were chosen from hundreds, taken over thirty years ago during numerous hiking trips through the Rocky Mountains around Jasper, Alberta. Through the "blending" and "morphing" of images, I hope to suggest an almost infinite panorama which will reveal itself as a scroll when it is gently unrolled, much like our eyes might move from left to right to scan a new horizon.

Mountain ranges that could be seen from the air while flying, or "remembered" in a dream, are bracketed by more intimate views and soft colours of the foothills. Here, "ANTHEM: Expressions of Canadian Identity" becomes our individual and shared experience of "wilderness" that only a few may be able to access directly.