

A Bank NOTE-able Canadian

Students will use the concept of historical significance to choose an iconic Canadian as a portrait subject for the Bank of Canada's new \$5 bank note. They will then create a design for their proposal.

Overview

Canada is getting a new \$5 bank note. In early 2020 the Bank of Canada asked for nominations from the public for whose portrait should appear on the note. The public nomination process, used for the first time to design the [\\$10 bank note featuring Viola Desmond](#), is an excellent opportunity to explore historical significance, one of the historical thinking concepts in many provincial and territorial curricula. This concept lets students examine how and why we choose important historical figures to represent Canada.

See [The Historical Thinking Project](#) or [The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts](#) by Peter Seixas and Tom Morton for more information.

Big idea

The portrait and symbols chosen for a bank note are historically significant because bank notes represent Canada.

Total time

120 minutes or two class periods

Grade levels

Grades 6 to 11; Elementary Cycle Three and Secondary I to V

Subject areas

- History
- Social studies

Learning objectives

Students will:

1. apply the concept of historical significance to the portrait subject on a Canadian bank note
2. research important Canadians
3. design a bank note that reflects Canada

Materials

Classroom supplies and technology

- computers or tablets with internet access for students (one per two to four students)
- white board and markers

Graphic organizers

1. Print the following:
 - **Graphic Organizer 1—A Bank NOTE-able Canadian** (one copy for each student)
 - **Graphic Organizer 2—Design Your Own Bank Note** (one copy for each student)

Online resources

From the Bank of Canada:

- Complete Bank Note Series
<https://www.bankofcanadamuseum.ca/complete-bank-note-series/>
- Frontiers Series \$5 Note
<https://www.bankofcanadamuseum.ca/complete-bank-note-series/2011-2013-polymer-series/polymer-series-5-note/>
- Canada's Vertical \$10
<https://www.bankofcanada.ca/banknotes/vertical10/>
- Principles of Bank Note Design
<https://www.bankofcanada.ca/banknotes/principles-bank-note-design/>
- The next bank NOTE-able Canadian
<https://bankofcanada.ca/banknoteable>
- Your nominations for the next \$5 bank note
<https://www.bankofcanada.ca/banknotes/banknoteable-5/nominees/>

For research:

- The Canadian Encyclopedia
<https://www.encyclopediecanadienne.com/en>
- Historica Canada, Heritage Minutes
<https://www.historicacanada.ca/heritageminutes>
- Dictionary of Canadian Biography
<http://www.biographi.ca/en/index.php>

Other

- Seixas, P. and T. Morton. 2012. *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts*. Toronto: Nelson.
<https://school.nelson.com/the-big-six/>
- Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, The Historical Thinking Project
<http://historicalthinking.ca/>

Activity 1: Explore our \$5 bank note

Time

20 minutes

1.1 Opening discussion

As a class, examine the [current \\$5 bank note](#).

Ask the students:

- Do they recognize the person on this note? Who is it?
- Why is Sir Wilfrid Laurier historically significant?
- What are the other images on the bank note? What do they represent?

1.2 Hands-on exercise

Divide the class into small groups of three to four.

Tell the students that the Bank of Canada will be redesigning the \$5 bank note, and it is looking for a portrait subject for this note.

Ask the groups to come up with a list of people who meet the following criteria. The portrait subject:

- is a Canadian (by birth or naturalization).
- has demonstrated outstanding leadership, achievement or distinction in any field, benefiting the people of Canada or in the service of Canada.
- has been deceased for at least 25 years (before March 11, 1995).
- is not a fictional character.

Encourage students to think about diversity and to include Canadians they have learned about recently. These could be Indigenous Canadians, women, local and regional historical figures, people of colour, veterans, francophones, etc. Students can use a computer to research their choices. The [Canadian Encyclopedia](#), [Heritage Minutes](#) and the [Dictionary of Canadian Biography](#) are good places to start.

Compile a list of the submissions from the whole class.

Ask each group to share one of their nominations with the class and discuss the person's significance as it relates to the selection criteria.

Explain that historical significance varies over time and from group to group. Therefore, the person they may think is the most significant may not be the same as that chosen by other students in the class or by someone 20 years ago.

1.3 Discussion

Ask the students:

- Was it hard to find people to put on your list?
- What were some of the things you considered important for your choices?
- Was it hard to choose only one person to present?
- Who would you choose to be on the next \$5 bank note?

Activity 2: Nominate an iconic Canadian

Time

40 minutes

2.1 Introduction

Explain the [public nomination process](#) for the next \$5 bank note:

- The Bank of Canada invited Canadians to submit names of iconic Canadians they feel deserved to be recognized on a bank note. Thousands of submissions were received from the Canadian public.

Show the class the [nominations submitted by Canadians](#) for the new \$5 and ask them to check if their nominee was included.

- An independent advisory council will review the nominations and the Minister of Finance will make the final decision.
- Canadian bank notes celebrate the diversity of Canadian society, culture and achievements. They are designed to be meaningful to Canadians today and for years to come and evoke pride and confidence in our country.

2.2 Hands-on exercise

Give each student a copy of Graphic Organizer 1—A Bank NOTE-able Canadian. Tell them that they are going to write their own proposal for who they feel should be on the new \$5 bank note. Even though the nominations are now closed, this is a good way to practise historical thinking.

In addition to the criteria selected by the Bank of Canada, there are many ways to determine the significance of a historical figure.

Explain some of the principles of historical significance (adapted from *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts*):

- People have historical significance if their actions resulted in or caused change.
- People have historical significance if they, or their life, shed light on an issue in history or contemporary life.

Students should choose one person from the list compiled by the whole class and complete the graphic organizer.

In the section that asks, “In 100 words or less, tell us why you have nominated this person,” encourage them to justify their answer using the principles of historical significance.

Students should work on their own (or in pairs) during the class.

2.3 Discussion

Ask the students:

- What did you learn about historical significance?
- How do you think the Minister of Finance should choose among all the submissions Canadians send in?

Activity 3: Design your own bank note

Time

60 minutes (or less if activity 3.2 is a take-home assignment)

3.1 Introduction

As a class, examine the [Viola Desmond \\$10 bank note](#).

Ask students to pick out features on the bank note besides Viola Desmond’s portrait.

The portrait subject is not the only important visual design element of a bank note. Bank notes also feature other significant images and symbols that tell their own stories. For example, once Viola Desmond was named as the portrait subject for the \$10, the Bank of Canada designed the rest of the note to reflect the theme of human rights and social justice. Much of the other imagery on the vertical \$10 reflects this theme.

Several images on the note complement Viola’s story and represent Canada’s ongoing pursuit of rights and freedoms, such as:

- a map of Halifax’s historic North End
- the Canadian Museum for Human Rights
- an eagle feather

- an excerpt of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- the laurel leaf, as seen in the Supreme Court of Canada

There are also several Canadian national symbols and images. These include:

- the Library of Parliament’s dome ceiling
- the Canadian flag
- the Canada Coat of Arms
- maple leaves

In designing Canadian bank notes, the Bank of Canada follows its [Principles of Bank Note Design](#). Show this web page to your students and highlight the section “Reflect Canada.”

Bank notes must reflect Canada and:

- promote Canada and Canadians—our values, culture, history, traditions, achievements or natural heritage;
- be clearly identifiable as Canadian through the use of symbols, words or images;
- be meaningful to Canadians today and for years to come; and
- evoke pride and confidence in Canada.

In addition to these principles, we also know that the new \$5 bank note will have a vertical design, like the \$10, and that it will be blue like the current \$5.

3.2 Hands-on exercise

Give each student a copy of Graphic Organizer 2—Design Your Own Banknote. On page 1 is a chart for students to brainstorm symbols. On page 2 is the design template.

Students will brainstorm and research symbols related to their portrait subject.

They can complete their design in class, or you can give it as a take-home assignment.

3.3 Discussion

Ask students:

- What are some of the symbols that you chose? What symbols do we have in common?
- Was it difficult to choose symbols to reflect both your portrait subject and Canada?

Extensions

- Advanced grades could write an essay on the historical significance of their portrait subject, highlighting the construction of historical significance and the subject’s place in the story of Canada.

- Examine the [complete series of bank notes](#) issued by the Bank of Canada since its founding in 1935. Using the historical thinking concept of continuity and change, answer the inquiry question: How has the way that Canadian identity is presented on bank notes changed or remained the same over the last century? Have a look at our blog post "[Landscape Engraved](#)" about the use of landscapes on bank notes.
- Use the Bank of Canada's [Fraud Prevention Kit](#) to examine the security features of bank notes and have your students improve the security of the notes they designed to deter counterfeiting.

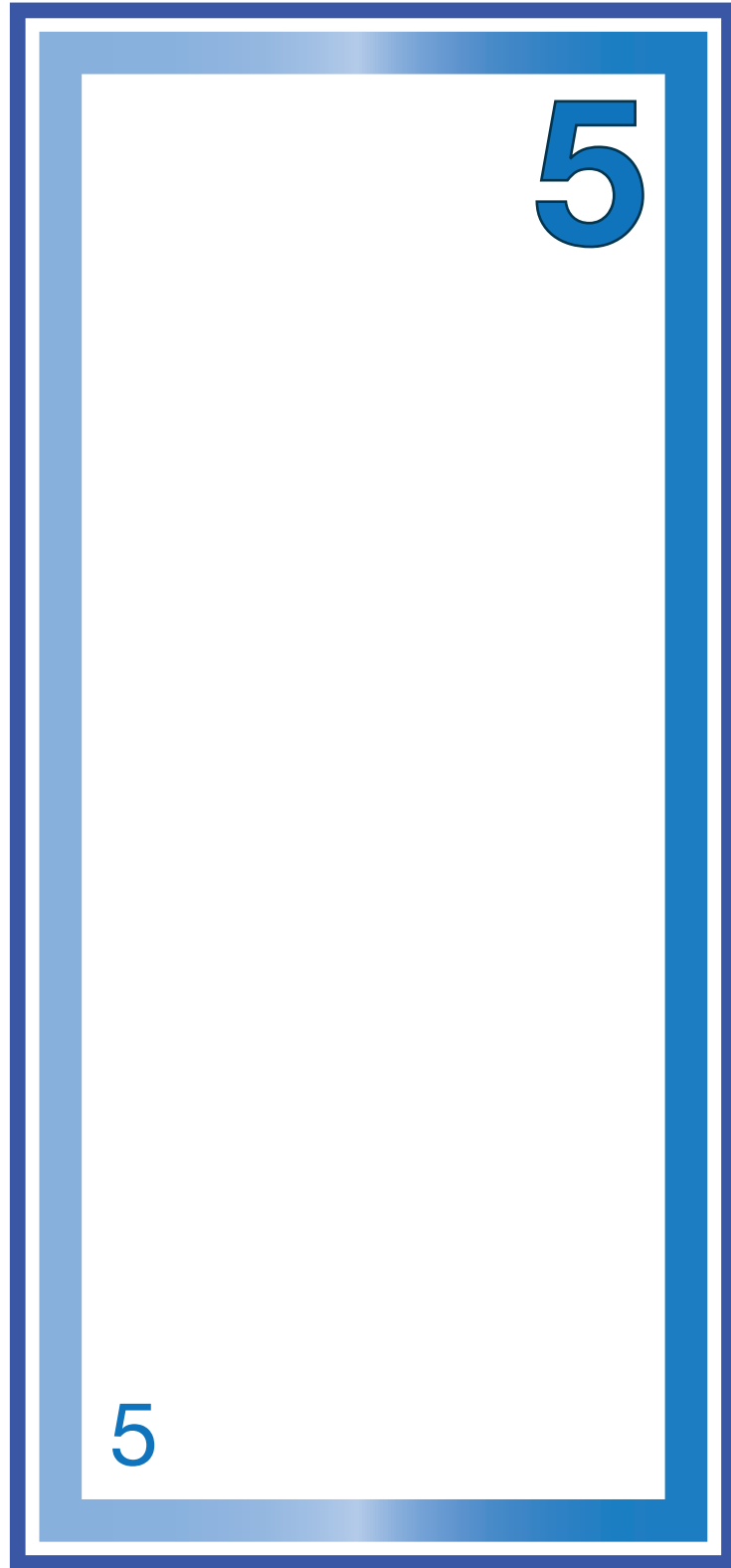
Design Your Own Bank Note

Portrait subject:

Feature	Explanation <i>Why did you choose this? How does it represent Canada?</i>	Tie-in <i>How does it relate to your portrait subject?</i>
Theme		
Symbol 1		
Symbol 2		
Symbol 3		
Symbol 4		
Symbol 5		



front/recto



back/verso

BANKOFCANADA.CA/BANKNOTEABLE
BANQUEDUCANADA.CA/SURUNBILLET