

A Noteworthy Woman

Students will use a historical thinking approach to examine the historical significance of the Viola Desmond \$10 bank note.

Overview

In 2018, the Bank of Canada unveiled a [new bank note](#) featuring Viola Desmond—the first woman, other than royalty, to be featured on a Canadian bank note in regular circulation.

This bank note provides a wonderful opportunity to explore the concept of *historical significance*, one of the *historical thinking* concepts incorporated into many provincial and territorial curricula.

For more information on [historical thinking](#), see *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts* by Peter Seixas and Tom Morton.

Big idea

The choice of who to put on a bank note is historically significant because bank notes are designed to represent Canada.

Total time

Approximately 60 minutes of instructional time and an additional 60 minutes for student presentations

Grade levels

Grades 8 to 12, Secondary II to V and CEGEP

Subject areas

- History
- Social studies

Learning objectives

Students will:

- Research important women in Canadian history
- Use the concept of historical significance to examine the portrait subjects of Canadian bank notes

- Create their own criteria to judge historical significance

Materials

Classroom supplies and technology

- Computers or tablets with internet access for students (one per two to four students)
- One \$10 Viola Desmond bank note

Online resources

From the [Bank of Canada](#):

- Complete Bank Note Series
<https://www.bankofcanadamuseum.ca/complete-bank-note-series/>
- Nominations – From 461 to One Iconic Canadian Woman
<https://www.bankofcanada.ca/banknotes/vertical10/banknoteable-woman/nominations/>
- Unveiling of the new \$10 bank note – Speech (Webcasts)
<https://www.bankofcanada.ca/multimedia/unveil-new-10-bank-note-speech-webcasts-08-march-2018/>
- Canada’s Vertical \$10 Note
<https://www.bankofcanada.ca/banknotes/vertical10/>

Other resources:

- Government of Canada Justice Laws Website *Bank of Canada Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c. B-2)
<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/B-2/>
- Seixas, P. and T. Morton. 2012. *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts*. Toronto: Nelson Education.
<http://historicalthinking.ca/about-historical-thinking-project>

For research on the short list nominees:

- Viola Desmond
 - The Bank of Canada, A Bank NOTE-able Canadian Woman
<https://www.bankofcanada.ca/banknotes/vertical10/banknoteable-woman/>
 - The Canadian Encyclopedia, Viola Desmond
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/viola-desmond/>
 - Heritage Historica Canada, Heritage Minutes: Viola Desmond
<https://www.historicacanada.ca/content/heritage-minutes/viola-desmond>
- E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)
 - The Canadian Encyclopedia, Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/pauline-johnson/>
 - Poetry Foundation, Emily Pauline Johnson
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/emily-pauline-johnson>

- Library and Archives Canada, Emily Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)
<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/first-nations/Pages/pauline-johnson.aspx>
- Elizabeth “Elsie” MacGill
 - The Canadian Encyclopedia, Elsie MacGill
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/elizabeth-muriel-gregory-macgill/>
 - Library and Archives Canada, Elizabeth Muriel Gregory MacGill
<https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/women/030001-1409-e.html>
- Fanny (Bobbie) Rosenfeld
 - The Canadian Encyclopedia, Fanny Rosenfeld
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/fanny-rosenfeld/>
 - Library and Archives Canada, Fanny “Bobbie” Rosenfeld (archived)
<https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/women/030001-1514-e.html>
 - Jewish Women’s Archive, Fanny “Bobbie” Rosenfeld (available in English only)
<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/rosenfeld-fanny>
 - CBC Sports, Fanny ‘Bobbie’ Rosenfeld: An icon for all ages
<https://www.cbc.ca/sports/2.9056/canada-150-rosenfeld-1.4169819>
- Idola Saint-Jean
 - The Canadian Encyclopedia, Idola Saint-Jean
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/idola-saint-jean/>
 - Archives de Montréal, Fonds Idola Saint-Jean (available in French only)
<https://archivesdemontreal.ica-atom.org/fonds-idola-saint-jean-190-1958>
 - Radio-Canada, Idola Saint-Jean, pionnière de la lutte féministe au Québec (available in French only)
<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/premiere/emissions/aujourd-hui-l-histoire/segments/entrevue/44135/idola-saint-jean-feministe-marie-lavigne>

Activity 1: Who is on our bank notes?

Students will examine the selection criteria for who appears on Canadian bank notes and make a list of people who would qualify.

Time

30 minutes

1.1 Opening discussion

As a class, examine the [Frontiers and Canadian Journey series bank notes](#).

Ask the students:

- Do they recognize the people on these notes? Who are they?
- Why are they important enough to be on our money?

1.2 Hands-on exercise

Divide the class into small groups of three to four.

Tell the students that the Bank of Canada would like to put a woman on the next bank note.

Ask the groups to come up with a list of women who meet the following criteria:

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

Encourage students to include local women in their lists. 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 woman's significance as it relates to the selection criteria.

1.3 Discussion

Ask the students:

- Was it hard to find women to put on your list?
- Was it hard to choose only one to present?
- Would you like to choose who will be on the next bank note?

Activity 2: A short list of significant women

Students will research the short list of nominees for the \$10 bank note and reflect on the selection process.

Time

45 minutes plus one additional class for presentations

2.1 Introduction

Explain the nomination process for the \$10 Viola Desmond bank note:

- On March 8, 2016, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invited Canadians to submit names of iconic Canadian women they felt deserved to be recognized on a bank note. This nomination process resulted in 461 candidates.

- The Bank of Canada asked an [Advisory Council](#) of prominent Canadians to choose from the 461 candidates. Council members used four additional criteria to decide on a long list of 12 nominees and eventually a short list of 5 nominees.
- The short list was presented to the Minister of Finance for approval.

2.2 Hands-on exercise

- Show your class the [short list](#) of the women who were nominated to appear on the \$10 note.
- Divide the class into five groups and assign each group one woman from that list.
- Ask each group to research their woman online. A great place to start is the [Canadian Encyclopedia](#). For more research links, see the “Online resources” section of this lesson plan.
- Tell each group that their job will be to argue for the significance of their nominee in a debate about which Canadian woman should appear on a bank note.
- Write the following four criteria on the white board for the class to see.
These are the additional criteria used by the Advisory Council to make the long and short lists.

The nominee should:

- have broken or overcome barriers,
- be inspirational,
- have made a significant change, and
- have left a lasting legacy.

Students will find sources and arguments for the historical significance of each woman. Their research may take a class period to complete, or you can assign it as homework.

- Arrange a debate during the following class. Allow each group to present their candidate. Visual aids are encouraged.
- At the end of all the presentations, ask the students to vote anonymously for who they would choose to be on the next bank note.

2.3 Discussion

Ask the students:

- Was the woman who won our class vote the most significant woman?
 - Historical significance varies from person to person and group to group. In her own way, each of these women was the most significant and deserved to be on the bank note. They all fulfilled the Advisory Council’s criteria for significance.
- Show the \$10 bank note featuring Viola Desmond.
- Explain that she is the first woman (besides royalty) to be featured on a Bank of Canada bank note.
- You can examine the [note](#) further. You can also show the [video of the unveiling](#).

In your discussion, share the following information with the students:

- The process for choosing what goes on a bank note has changed a lot in the last 20 years. It has started to include input from the public, and this note was the first to have an open call for nominations from Canadians.
- The Advisory Council consulted with historians and held focus groups to find out what Canadians thought of each nominee in the short list. The Governor of the Bank of Canada presented the short list to the Minister of Finance. As is always the case, the Minister of Finance made the final decision on the “form and material” of the new bank note, as per the [Bank of Canada Act](#).

Ask the students:

- What do you think of the criteria chosen by the Bank of Canada and the Advisory Council for the historical significance of the nominees?
- What do you think of the choice that was made and the decision-making process? How would you have done it differently?

Extensions

- Research, choose, and present another notable Canadian who could appear on a bank note in the future. Use themes related to what you’ve been studying in class. For example, students could nominate the first Indigenous person to be on a bank note or a person from your province or region.
- [Design a bank note that reflects Canada.](#)
- Research the historical significance of other people who are or have been on Canadian bank notes and think critically about their representation of Canada. Compare the people on Canadian bank notes with those on the bank notes of other countries.