

IMMIGRATION AND THE RACIALIZATION OF WORK



INTRODUCTION

Available as a free download from the ETFO website, *Learning from Labour: Lesson Plans for Intermediate Learning* based on the Ontario Curriculum features nine lesson plans based on overall expectations of the Ontario Grade Seven or Eight Ontario History or Language Arts curriculum.

In these lessons, students examine events and issues through the lens of human rights, child labour, urban and rural labour, labour day, labour standards and immigration and racialization.

The excerpt that follows focuses on the issues faced by Black, Chinese, and Irish workers who came to Canada in the previous centuries.

LESSON PLAN

Curriculum Expectation(s) and Big Ideas and Concepts

Unit: Immigration and the Racialization of Work

Grade: Grade 7 and 8

Teacher(s) Timeline: 45 minute lesson

Lesson Description: Students will examine ways in which the prevailing societal racist view of immigrants from non-British backgrounds affected both their living and working conditions during the pre- and post-Confederation era.

LEARNING GOAL(S)

- I have an understanding of how racist attitudes and discriminatory practices negatively impacted immigrants and minorities during this time.
- I understand how the legacy of racism and discrimination continues to harm people in present day society.

- I can read and analyze both primary and secondary source historical sources to find information about the working and living conditions of Black, Irish and Chinese workers.

MATERIALS

- Computer and projector to display various websites (optional).
- Individual computers for students or the teacher can print out information from one or two of the websites for each of the immigrant groups: Irish workers on the Rideau Canal, Chinese railroad workers in B.C., Black Loyalist Workers.
- Chart paper and markers
- Post-it-notes for student brainstorming activity
- Lives of the Immigrant Worker comparison worksheet

TASK COMPONENT

Before (Activation/Review): 5 minutes

Instruction

Display three anchor charts at the front of the class with the following terms written on each chart:

- Immigration
- Stereotype
- Discrimination

Invite students to write a few words to describe their understanding of the concept/ or an example related to the concept on their post-it note and affix it to the appropriate chart paper. Read the class responses out loud to stimulate discussion about the relationship between these three ideas.

During (Working on it) 20 minutes

Divide students into groups of three; each person in the group will be responsible for researching the working conditions, struggles and discrimination experienced by Chinese, Irish and Black workers by visiting one or two website links in the readings section and completing one-third of the Lives of the Immigrant Worker worksheet (see page 42). Students will then assist group members in completing the remaining two sections of the comparison worksheet by discussing their research.

LIFE OF THE IMMIGRANT WORKER JIGSAW COMPARISON CHART

Instructions

Step 1

Choose one of the following immigrant groups in pre- and post-Confederation era Canada; Irish workers on the Rideau Canal, Black Loyalists in Nova Scotia, Chinese railroad workers in B.C. Each person in the group should choose a different ethnic/racial group to research.

Step 2

Using one or two of the websites provided by your teacher, complete the chart outlining the living/working conditions of that group.

Step 3

Share your findings with the other two members of your group in order to help each other to complete the information about the remaining two ethnic/racial groups.

Step 4

Be prepared to report your findings to the class by answering the question, “How did discrimination and racist attitudes towards the Chinese, Irish and Blacks affect the working conditions of those groups during the mid-late 1800s?”

After (Reflecting/Connecting/Consolidating): 10 minutes

Ask some of the students to give an oral report on their findings by answering the following questions:

- What were some of the working conditions faced by the workers that you researched?
- How did racist and discriminatory attitudes towards Chinese/Irish/Blacks affect the working conditions of those groups during the mid to late 1800s?

REFLECTION

Ask students to answer the following questions in their journals: “Is there evidence that the racialization of work still exists in present-day Canadian workplaces?” and “Are some ethnic and racial groups still over- or under-represented in some types of work?”

The racialization of work will most likely be a new expression for most students, however the notion that certain ethnic or racial groups were suitable or unsuitable may be familiar concepts.

NEXT STEPS

Research the work that unions are doing today to combat racism and discrimination by visiting websites such as The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, cbtu.ca/ or the Aboriginal Iron Workers website, www.aboriginalironworkers.ca/.

WEBSITES

B.C. Archives: Chinese Restrictions. Source: Canada (1885). Select Committee on Chinese Restrictions. Report of Select Committee on Chinese Restrictions. Chapter 39. archives.leg.bc.ca/EPLibraries/leg_arc/document/ID/LibraryTest/1639230236

Black Loyalists. Equal Pay? Retrieved June 6, 2015 from blackloyalist.com/cdc/story/prejudice/pay.htm

Black Loyalists. Shelburne Riot. Retrieved June 6, 2015 from blackloyalist.com/cdc/story/prejudice/riot.htm

Explorail. Chinese Railroad Workers in British Columbia: Railways and Immigration to Canada. histoiredurailhistory.ca/immigration_en.html

Government of Canada. Black Loyalist workers in Nova Scotia: Government of Canada. cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/black/history.asp

Multicultural History Society of Ontario. The Ties that Bind Multicultural History Society of Ontario. mhso.ca/tiesthatbind/ChineseRailWorkers.php

Rideau Canal the Kingston Irish Folk Club. Rideau Canal. kingstonirish.wordpress.com/irish-history-2/rideau-canal/

Watson, K. W. (2003). Irish workers on the Rideau Canal: Those Who Laboured. Rideau Canal. rideau-info.com/canal/articles/laboured.html

“THE RACIALIZATION OF WORK WILL MOST LIKELY BE A NEW EXPRESSION FOR MOST STUDENTS, HOWEVER THE NOTION THAT CERTAIN ETHNIC OR RACIAL GROUPS WERE SUITABLE OR UNSUITABLE MAY BE FAMILIAR CONCEPTS.”

LIFE OF THE IMMIGRANT WORKER WORKSHEET

Immigrant Group	Types of work	Working/Living conditions	Examples of discrimination unfair treatment
<p>Irish Workers</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>
<p>Chinese Workers</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>
<p>Black Loyalists</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>