

Re-Imagining Citizenship: A Canadian Perspective

by Jennifer Tupper (Jennifer.Tupper@uregina.ca)

Social studies educators are well aware that the central goal of teaching social studies is the creation of responsible or good citizens. However, I wonder how often we take the time to reflect on what is meant by citizenship. The Program of Studies in Alberta, Canada explicitly supports the goal of citizenship stating that “responsible citizenship is the ultimate goal of social studies and ‘the responsible citizen’ is knowledgeable, purposeful and makes responsible choices.” However, what exactly constitutes a “responsible” citizen is uncertain, and the fact that the term is placed in quotation marks suggests that the concept remains somewhat ambiguous.

In Alberta, part of what constitutes “responsible citizenship” is the ability to “participate constructively in the democratic process by making rational decisions.” Some teachers and students understand this to mean voting, paying taxes and supporting the nation-state. They promote an essentially minimalist approach to citizenship. For others, responsible citizenship necessarily requires a critique of the existing system and perhaps even engagement in counter-culture movements or struggles for social justice. In this case citizenship may be understood as a process transcending individual acts in an effort to enact some form of change. Important issues students and teachers need to consider are whether political protesters are acting as good citizens when they challenge the social status quo and whether simply voting and paying taxes is sufficient to qualify someone as a good citizen.

Students generally learn that the liberal democratic system in which they live is one where all individuals are equal. According to this perspective, as long as we live in a democracy, our differences appear to have no bearing on our ability to engage in the political system or our access to that system. However, when viewed from the experience of historically marginal groups, such as women and members of the First Nations (the Canadian term for Native Americans), citizenship rights appear neither universal nor neutral. In the past, their exclusion from full citizenship was justified in part on the grounds that they were either biologically or culturally incapable of rational involvement in the democratic process.

When given the opportunity, experienced social studies teachers in Canada that I have interviewed have challenged the more limited concepts of citizenship. According to one social studies teacher, “[We need] to look at citizenship as a living, interactive kind of process that’s ongoing. I think one of the problems is when we try and define citizenship and we try and put it in a box. I don’t think any box is big enough.” Another social studies teacher thought, “Voting is participating if you want, but there’s a lot of things in which you can participate. Your whole life actually you participate . . . as an individual you do play an important role whether that role is in the work that you do, whether that role is in what you do outside of your work, and whether that role is in your family.” A third experienced teacher made these comments about citizenship. “I feel the whole notion of responsible citizenship is more than just going out there and voting. It’s about trying to get the students to see things from other perspectives as much as you possibly can. . . . I spoke with my colleagues about the question of citizenship and the consensus seemed to be that we pretty much focus on a very passive role. So how do you make it so it’s more of an active thing? And I don’t think you can do it in that chunk in the sense that we’re on this unit now, and therefore we’re going to teach you, in this unit, how you become an active citizen. It has to be done throughout the year throughout the curriculum. . . we have to open the door to all sorts of new conversations.”

Where the Alberta Program of Studies calls for “rational” and “constructive” citizenship, these teachers tend to embrace a more active and productive form of citizenship, even when that means questioning liberal democratic structures. Their insights suggest that we can broaden our understandings of citizenship in social studies education. Citizenship is as much about multiple forms of participation and multiple ways of being as it is about engaging in democratic processes.

If we are going to talk about teaching citizenship, we must bear in mind the false universalism embedded in liberal democratic citizenship. We must also explore the multiple meanings of citizenship from a diversity of perspectives. I challenge you after reading this article to consider your own understandings of citizenship and respond to the question “what makes a citizen”?

Using “Prompts” to Improve Classroom Discussion

by Thomas Chambers

It's the moment every history instructor dreads - you attempt to discuss a primary document in class and your students respond with utter silence, blank stares, paper shuffling, or intent investigation of their desktops. Their lack of preparation, indifference, limited analytical skills, reticence, and even downright sloth frustrate one of the most basic techniques we as historians employ to foster “active learning,” discussing primary source documents. Having engaged in many years of teaching and multiple techniques to stimulate classroom discussion, I believe that I have arrived at a fairly successful solution. I call it “Prompts” and it both improves the level and quantity of student participation, and employs two current pedagogical trends: active learning and technology.

“Prompts” are a series of brief questions designed to be read along with selected primary source documents. For a given class meeting, students will consult, for example, the Emancipation Proclamation; they will then respond to four to five questions designed to guide them through the document's key points and themes. I use sources that are hot-linked to my course syllabi and readily available in full-text electronic form. The “Prompts” are posted on Blackboard, which my tech-savvy students navigate with ease. During a specific class meeting I employ traditional lecture methodology broken up with discussion of these documents and corresponding “Prompts.” The questions range from the specific (Where are slaves freed?) to broadly interpretative (Why didn't Lincoln make this an abolitionist document?). Those questions become the basis and catalyst for classroom discussion, and I prepare a few additional questions to further develop the themes I emphasize. For instance, after asking “Where are slaves freed?” I might follow up by querying, “Why did the Emancipation Proclamation not cover Union-occupied areas?” I have discovered that both the level and quality of student participation have increased as a result of this method, and students tell us that they better understand the documents and are more willing to speak because of the “Prompts.” While my success might be limited by class size, institution type, and teaching methods, I feel that “Prompts” offer a useful method to increase classroom discussion and to improve history pedagogy.

Based on an anonymous survey distributed to students, “Prompts” work. 91.9% of students rated the questions as helpful and 96.8% considered them worthwhile. More importantly, students stated that they were more likely to participate in class discussion (61.3%) once they had consulted the “Prompts,” and that doing so increased their confidence in speaking during class (74.2%). These results confirm one of my key assumptions - that providing a mechanism to get students thinking about the sources before class meetings improved discussion. But posting the questions and documents on Blackboard was the easy part of the experiment; having students read the sources and thinking about the questions poses a greater challenge. In fact, my surveys indicate that less than half of students (46.8%) consulted the “Prompts” for every class meeting, and that a similar number (45.2%) read more than they would have ordinarily, somewhat disappointing figures. Part of the difficulty stems from the fact that only 51.6% of students actually wrote down their answers to the “Prompts.” Given more time and resources, I would collect and check written responses at every class meeting. But that's in a perfect world.

Interviews with individual students revealed that reading the “Prompts” did help them better understand the documents, especially when the questions required additional analytical thinking and interpretation. One student said that she did the readings and consulted the “Prompts,” but only fully understood the documents after class discussion. This is exactly the kind of situation I hoped to develop in that students were forced to think, and saw history as something more than dates and facts to memorize. Coming to class with questions of their own, which students sometimes posed in addition to the “Prompts,” constitutes the core of active learning. Another student expressed frustration that there were no definite answers, but that is exactly my point. Getting students to think differently, to engage the material and recognize its many interpretations, represents one of the main benefits of using “Prompts”.

Overall “Prompts” offer a valuable tool to engage students in the active learning process and to introduce them to the interpretation and analysis of primary sources. I may be reinventing the wheel or only introducing another educational gimmick, but it works.

Town Meeting – Portal to Our Past

by Deborah Benson

I participated in a pseudo-19th century town meeting as part of an educators' workshop at Genesee Country Village in Mumford, NY. My colleagues and I were asked to decide the outcome of a civil proceeding involving two residents of the town who were involved in a dispute over the destruction of one man's crop by another man's pig. The owner of the pig was asked to pay monetary damages. Following a lively dialogue between plaintiff and defendant, we (the townspeople) asked questions and then rendered our decision in a majority rule proceeding.

I decided to use the same format in my fourth grade classroom. The town meeting was the first of four lessons in an integrated Social Studies/Math/ELA/Arts unit that poses the essential question, "How have economic factors influenced human rights?" The objective of the unit was to introduce my students to the economic rationale for slavery from a 19th century point of view. The town meeting involved four individuals: Mr. Jones, Mr. Smith, Mr. Taylor and the Moderator (played by myself). I chose the three best readers in my class to portray the respective gentlemen and allowed them approximately one hour prep time over two days. The scenario I provided was:

- Jed, an enslaved African owned by Jones, escaped. Jones blamed Smith for the loss of Jed. He claimed Smith took Jed to the ferry landing, aiding in his escape "across the river." Jones demanded \$200 from Smith as payment for the loss of Jed.
- Smith readily admitted taking Jed to the ferry landing, stating he "merely gave a fellow human being a ride on a hot day." He claimed no knowledge of Jed's intentions or actions upon reaching the ferry landing.
- Smith stated that he did not believe any man had the right to own another. Jones pointed out that the laws of their state *did* allow slavery.
- Smith suggested that Taylor, the ferry man, might be held responsible for the loss of Jed as it was Taylor who took Jed across the river to a free state.
- Taylor stated that he was "just doing his job." Jed paid the fare and Taylor took him across the river.

As moderator, I informed students that townspeople would be required to state their own views at the end of the debate. Students were riveted as the characters debated the moral and economic perspectives of slavery and the culpability of each individual involved in the case. Jones and Smith each presented a convincing argument in defense of their respective opinions on the issue of slavery. Both men further presented a logical defense of their request – Jones to receive monetary reimbursement and Smith to be exonerated of all responsibility in Jed's escape. Following the debate, the townspeople were allowed to ask questions of the characters. When all questions had been answered, townspeople gave their opinions, which allowed teacher assessment of student understanding.

When all had stated their opinions, a vote was taken. Interestingly, the vote did not echo the majority of statements made by the townspeople. Most believed that Smith had consciously aided in Jed's escape and should compensate Jones for his loss. None felt that Taylor had any conscious role in the event. However, the vote had 90% deciding in Smith's favor. It seems that the townspeople were swayed by the opinions of their neighbors and by non-legal issues, indicating full student engagement in the activity.

As moderator, a teacher's role is to make a brief (scripted) statement to set the scene for the meeting and to facilitate the question and answer period. Paraphrasing of student statements aided in student understanding of classmates' points of view. When the meeting was officially adjourned and the characters stepped out of their roles, students were very enthusiastic about the activity. Many asked when we would have another town meeting and several suggested we have one every day!

Subsequent lessons in the unit included a math lesson entitled *The Value of Jed's Work*, a Social Studies lesson using primary source documents (reward posters for escaped slaves), and an Arts lesson involving a choral reading of Maya Angelou's poem, *Still I Rise*. Student performance on those tasks as well as class discussion as part of each activity reveal that students have a good understanding of how economic factors have affected human rights.

The Great Amazing Race: Integrating Mathematics and Global History

by Christine Wilkerson and Kerry Schaefer

Some subject matter lends itself to an interdisciplinary approach. English teachers can explore the novel *Night* as Social Studies classes develop an understanding of the Holocaust. But the mere mention of math sends most social studies teachers into a cold sweat. However, everything students learn has a history behind it, including math. Every civilization, empire, and era had mathematical advancements that supported the development of technology and contributed to today's world. Grade 9 Global Studies classes, in conjunction with 9th grade math classes, can explore the history of mathematics as a year-long project.

The purpose of the "Great Amazing Race" is for students to learn about the history of mathematics as they learn mathematical concepts. Math students discover interesting mathematical ideas developed over thousands of years. In Social Studies classes, they develop a fuller understanding of the culture in which these mathematical theorems developed and a more accurate perspective of how astounding these mathematical discoveries truly were. Generally students work in teams and use the internet to discover a minimum of five mathematical facts about a society. They cannot move onto the next society until they make their discoveries. The first team to complete the task for each society "wins" the race.

While studying Babylonia, students learn how math was linked to the development of agriculture in the region. In order to have an accurate calendar, the Babylonians developed a math system based on 60 (instead of the modern 10). The idea of 60 seconds in a minute, 60 minutes in an hour, and a 24-hour day are based on 60. The Babylonians were also the first civilization to develop what we know as the Pythagorean theorem ($a^2 + b^2 = c^2$), which measures the sides of a triangle. The Babylonians needed the theory to build the large buildings that established them as an advanced civilization.

Students discover that the Egyptians used math to build the pyramids and developed the idea of pi (~3.14) to help them calculate the area of circles. Because trade was important in Egypt, they also developed the basics of multiplication, division and the use of fractions. Greek mathematicians living in Egypt used geometry to calculate the circumference of the earth 1500 years before Columbus.

Did you know? al'Khwarizmi, whose full name is Abu Abd-Allah ibn Musa al'Khwarizmi, was born about AD 790 near Baghdad, and died about 850. His most important contribution, written in 830, was Hisab al-jabr w'al-muqabala. From the al-jabr in the title we get algebra. The treatise develops a system for the solutions of quadratic expressions including geometric principles for completing the square. - <http://members.aol.com/bbyars1/algebra.html>.

Math was important to Meso-American civilizations as well. The Mayans used a math system with a base of twenty to make elaborate measurements of the heavens and the world around them and developed the concept of zero. The Inca used quipu, knotted cords of various lengths, to record numerical records.

Other areas students can visit include West Africa, China and East Asia, India and South Asia, the Islamic World and Western Europe. A useful starting point for research is <http://cybersleuth-kids.com/sleuth/Math/History/index.htm>. It includes links to "Mathematician Biographies" (sorted by name and era); Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek and Mayan math sites; and a number of sites on the history of math.

The project concludes with a 2-3-page individual paper where each student describes their journey and the most interesting math fact they discovered. To receive full credit, they must use their knowledge of the culture's history and development in their explanation of how and why the mathematical discovery flourished.

Jewish-Persian Folk Painting: A Study in Horizontal and Vertical Cultural Diffusion

by Carolyn Herbst

The study of cultural exchange, or “cultural diffusion,” is a major theme in the Global History curriculum. This article is from a paper for a course on Jewish Art at Hebrew University taught by the Israeli artist Yitzhak Greenfield. It includes a learning activity originally published in the *ATSS/UFT Journal*, XLVII (1), Spring, 1997.

A study of the Persian-Jewish cultural experience begins in the complex of seven old ethnic neighborhoods called “Zikhronot” between Monahah Jehuda and Bezalel Streets in modern day Jerusalem. Between 1880 and 1930, Persian Jews settled in the Neveh Shalom neighborhood of Jerusalem and by 1918, 788 of its 1,103 inhabitants were Persian. Today Persian Jews have somewhat assimilated into Israeli society and moved to more modern quarters throughout the city. Artists and intellectuals live in their old neighborhoods, but some of the traditional Persian culture remains and can be seen in rituals and decorations in an old Persian synagogue.

These rituals and decorations show horizontal cultural diffusion between the Persian-Jewish and the Persian-Muslim communities. Older men take off their shoes when entering the synagogue as if they were entering a mosque. On the Sabbath and on holidays members of the congregation wear black Astrakhan hats, reminiscent of the headdress of the Persian Shah and Persian aristocracy. Green, which is the holy color of Islam, marks festive occasions such as weddings, bar mitzvahs and circumcisions. Chairs are padded in green and the curtain covering the Ark is green and with embroidered flowers in the Persian arabesque style.

The relationship between Persian-Muslim and Persian-Jewish decorative art goes back in history and their influence on more recent cultural practices is an example of vertical cultural diffusion. It can be seen in the similarities between oriental Hebrew illuminated manuscripts and Muslim decorations in Persian versions of the Koran. The mutual impact can be seen in the wall paintings in an ancient Jewish synagogue at Dura-Europos in Syria and in more recent Persian-Jewish folk painting. Dura-Europos had been a Roman fortress on the Euphrates frontier and was destroyed by invaders in 256 AD. Paintings in its synagogue show Old Testament scenes with Greco-Roman artistic attributes. These paintings influenced 19th century Persian-Jewish folk painting, modified however, to reflect new Persian and Jewish elements and symbols. These include Persian-style dress and floral displays and the Star of David.

Recent Persian and Persian-Jewish folk painting are examples of both vertical and horizontal cultural diffusion. They are derived from old sources, in Persian art copying is acceptable, yet offer simplified, cruder versions of these sources. Both are done on old paper and include script. The Persian-Jewish folk painting, however, has recognizable Jewish themes and symbols as well as Judeo-Persian instead of Persian (Farsi) writing.

Learning Activity: This is a magic carpet activity. We will transport ourselves in time and place as we examine Persian culture from the 16th and 17th centuries. In that period, an art form developed called Persian miniature painting. It was done on small rectangles of paper or silk in book form, with people, flora and fauna “pounced” or traced from a master worker’s stock figures. This is an art of intense color and pattern and a flat, nonrealistic perspective. This activity is easy to do, even for students who say they cannot draw. It rejects the need to draw from observable life and relies on the use of imagination for the placement and size of figures. Students need ordinary copier paper, pencils for tracing outlines, and crayons for coloring. Because students trace figures, color, pattern, detail and placement are important. Students can trace figures of whatever size they want, anywhere in the center of the double frame. They can add decoration and pattern with crayons such as a double borders of flowers and geometric designs. They should try to abandon Western European artistic concepts of perspective, modeling with color, light and shadow, and a central focus of activity. Examples of Persian miniature painting can be found on the internet at <http://www.youngartists.com/mphatouf.htm>.

Selected Resources: Goodenough, E. (1964). *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, Vol. 10* (NY: Pantheon); Halper, J. “The Persian Jews of Neveh Shalom,” *Ariel, A Review of Arts and Letters in Israel*, 53, 183, 34-50; Wigoder, G. ed. (1972). *Jewish Art and Civilization, Vol. I* (Jerusalem: Weidenfield and Nicholson).

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