

Do the Mounties Always Get Their Man?

An Examination of the Mounties as an Enduring Symbol of Canadian Hardiness and Persistence

Introduction

Students need to understand the great difficulty involved in settling the Canadian West. The coming together of numerous cultures, the great distances, and providing safety for new Canadian settlers was of paramount importance, not to mention making sure the area was properly claimed before the United States could assert their authority in the area. What do the Mounties represent to Canadians? What do they represent to the world? Why have they become such an important symbol of Canadian pride? Were the Mounties worthy of becoming this great Canadian icon? Did they live up to and truly epitomize that image?

Project Explanation

In this project, students will develop an appreciation of the problems and difficulties associated with enforcing the law and keeping the peace in the Canadian West. The Mounties represent Canada around the world, as seen recently during the outpouring of grief for the four slain RCMP officers in Alberta, and students will examine what they symbolize to Canadians and to other cultures. They will examine the life, stories, personalities, qualities, and traits of both the Maverick Mounties and the forces that they were a part of, evaluating whether or not the reputation was justly deserved.

Alberta Social Studies Curriculum Unit Connections

Grade Four - Alberta: The Land, Histories and Stories

4.2 The Stories, Histories and People of Alberta

Grade Five - Canada: The Land, Histories and Stories

5.2 Histories and Stories of Ways of Life in Canada

5.3 Canada: Shaping an Identity

Grade Seven - Canada: Origins, Histories and Movement of People

7.2 Following Confederation: Canadian Expansions

Materials & Resources Needed:

- *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta* - Character Biographies and Online Artifacts
<http://www.glenbow.org/mavericks>
- Sam Steel Historical Minute
<http://www.histori.ca/minutes/minute.do?ID=10187>
- Romancing the Redcoat: A Canadian Hero Lost in Hollywood
<http://home.ica.net/~paulc/canux/article/mountie.html>
- Due South
- http://www.tvtoome.com/tvtome/servlet/ShowMainServlet/showid-305/Due_South/#info
- Dudley Do-Right Movie
<http://movies.go.com/parentpreviews/review?rid=24>
- Dudley Do-Right Cartoon
<http://www.programexchange.com/public/animated/dudley.html>

Procedures

When introducing this project, begin by having students brainstorm to identify some of the symbols they know represent something. Symbols may include flags and coat of arms, animals, birds, trees, or other things from the natural environment; historical events and heroes; inventions or predominant technologies; and traditional holidays or festivals. Have the students identify various national, provincial, and regional symbols. For example:

Canada - maple leaf, beaver, flag, hockey
 Alberta - wild rose, mountains and prairie, oil
 Calgary - white cowboy hats, Stampede
 Christians - cross
 Teachers - apple

What feelings or thoughts do these symbols convey? Why do they represent that group of people?

The Sam Steel Historical Minute discusses the reputation of the Mounties at the time, and will help the students begin to understand what their life would have been like. The federal government was worried it would lose the West, as many American politicians called for a military takeover of the area. The Mounties were also needed to keep the peace between the First Nations people, the settlers and ranchers, and the American whisky traders. The Mounties earned a reputation for being tough but fair, and created law and order in the West. They were respected by First Nations leaders, which helped to avoid the violence that took place in the U.S. between the First Nations, settlers, and the army.

Students will now examine the life of the Mountie Mavericks in the *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta* site. They will research the life, accomplishments, stories, personalities, qualities and personal traits of one the individuals or of the forces as a group. Through this, they will examine how each of the Mavericks live up to the image of the Mounties, and how they may fall short of that reputation. Were they perfect, or were they human beings who had flaws? Why or why not?

The results could then be compared to the stereotypes of the Mounties, or even of Canadians in general, as non-Canadians see them, or as they have been portrayed in the media. There have been hundreds of books about the Mounties, television shows like *Due South*, cartoons such as *Dudley Do-Right*, and many movies such as the Disney version of *Dudley Do-Right* with Brendan Fraser.

Are there Canadian stereotypes that come from the Mounties? Do they still truly represent us as Canadians? What stereotypes of the Mounties or of Canadians do we see in many of these non-Canadian portrayals of our country? Are these accurate stereotypes or are they exaggerated?

Assessment and Evaluation

- Students and their teacher should develop their own rubric by identifying evaluation criteria for the project that will match their own learner outcomes. This allows students to understand the expectations for their work and to have input into the ongoing evaluation process.
- Students may use the project rubric as a guide for writing a self-assessment of their project work. They will determine their level for each of the categories and use the criteria specified in their rubric to justify them.
- After completing the project, students may talk or journal about what they felt they did very positively, what they had difficulty with, and how they would change how they would approach a similar project in the future.

Ideas to Enrich this Project

- Students may brainstorm, design and develop a new symbol that could represent the RCMP, the NWMP, one of the Mavericks, or even for the province of Alberta. They could design a flag, a stamp, a crest, or another type of symbols to represent the Mounties, now after the slaying of the four Alberta constables. Students will then write about why they chose that symbol and how it accurately represents their subject.
- Students could research the actual RCMP flag, crest, uniform, or history and present their findings to their classmates.