



Reading the Symbols
Teacher's Program Guide

TeacherResources
AtGlenbow

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Teacher's Program Guide for School Visits

What do objects tell us about a culture's physical, psychological and spiritual needs? In *Reading the Symbols*, students will look deeply for symbolism on artifacts, discover unique worldviews of the Blackfoot people and learn how they coexisted with the natural world to meet their needs. This program develops the student's skills in inquiry, observation and scientific investigation.

This guide will assist you in preparing for your visit to Glenbow Museum. It contains pre-visit lessons, vocabulary terms as well as follow up activities. Engaging in the suggested activities before and after your visit will reinforce the ideas in the program and link classroom learning to the Museum experience. The activities require few materials and can be adjusted to meet the age and needs of your students.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Grade 4

Social Studies:

4.2 The Stories, Histories and Peoples of Alberta

4.2.1 appreciate how an understanding of Alberta's history, peoples and stories contributes to their own sense of belonging and identity:

- recognize how stories of people and events provide multiple perspectives on past and present events (I, TCC)
- recognize oral traditions, narratives and stories as valid sources of knowledge about the land, culture and history (CC, TCC)
- recognize the presence and influence of diverse Aboriginal peoples as inherent to Alberta's culture and identity (CC, I, TCC)
- demonstrate respect for places and objects of historical significance (I, LPP, TCC)

4.2.2 assess, critically, how the cultural and linguistic heritage and diversity of Alberta has evolved over time by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- Which First Nations originally inhabited the different areas of the province? (CC, LPP, TCC)
- What do the stories of Aboriginal peoples tell us about their beliefs regarding the relationship between people and the land? (TCC)

4.3 Alberta: Celebrations and Challenges

4.3.1 appreciate the factors contributing to quality of life in Alberta:

- value and respect their own and other cultural identities (C, I)
- demonstrate respect for the rights, opinions and perspectives of others (C, I)
- demonstrate respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity in Alberta (C, I)
- appreciate the influence of the natural environment and resources on the growth and development of Alberta (ER, LPP)
- value and respect their relationships with the environment (C, ER, LPP)

4.3.3 examine, critically, Alberta's changing cultural and social dynamics by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- In what ways have Aboriginal peoples and communities changed over time? (CC, I, TCC)
- How do buildings, historic sites and institutions reflect the establishment and cultural diversity of communities in Alberta (i.e., Glenbow Museum, Royal Alberta Museum, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park, Father Lacombe Chapel Provincial Historic Site, Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village)? (CC, I, LPP, TCC)
- How do the names of geographic places reflect the origins of the people who inhabited, discovered or developed communities in these places? (CC, I, LPP, TCC)

- How does living in a particular community, region or province help shape individual and collective identity? (CC, I, LPP)

Grade 5

Social Studies:

5.2 Histories and Stories of Ways of Life in Canada

5.2.1 appreciate the complexity of identity in the Canadian context:

- recognize how an understanding of Canadian history and the stories of its peoples contributes to their sense of identity (I, TCC)
- acknowledge oral traditions, narratives and stories as valid sources of knowledge about the land and diverse Aboriginal cultures and history (CC, I, TCC)

5.2.2 examine, critically, the ways of life of Aboriginal peoples in Canada by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- What do the stories of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples tell us about their beliefs regarding the relationship between people and the land? (I, CC, TCC, LPP)
- How are the Aboriginal cultures and ways of life unique in each of the western, northern, central and eastern regions of Canada? (I, CC, TCC)
- How were the natural environment and geography of each region of Canada determining factors of the diversity among Aboriginal groups (e.g., languages, symbolism)? (LPP, TCC)
- In what ways do anthropology and archaeology contribute to our understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples? (CC, LPP, TCC)

Grade 7

Social Studies:

7.1 Toward Confederation

7.1.1 appreciate the influence of diverse Aboriginal, French and British peoples on events leading to Confederation (C, I, TCC)

7.1.2 appreciate the challenges of co-existence among peoples (C, CC, I, LPP)

7.1.3 compare and contrast diverse social and economic structures within the societies of Aboriginal, French and British peoples in pre-Confederation Canada by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- What were the different ways in which Aboriginal societies were structured (i.e., Iroquois Confederacy, Ojibwa, Mi'kmaq)? (CC, I, LPP)
- How did the structures of Aboriginal societies affect decision making in each society (i.e., role and status of women, consensus building)? (CC, TCC, PADM)

All Grades

Social Studies:

S.1 develop skills of critical thinking and creative thinking:

- determine the validity of information based on context, bias, source, objectivity, evidence or reliability to broaden understanding of a topic or an issue
- evaluate, critically, ideas, information and positions from multiple perspectives
- demonstrate the ability to analyze current affairs from multiple perspectives
- re-evaluate personal opinions to broaden understanding of a topic or an issue
- generate creative ideas and strategies in individual and group activities
- access diverse viewpoints on particular topics by using appropriate technologies
- assemble and organize different viewpoints in order to assess their validity

S.2 develop skills of historical thinking:

- analyze selected issues and problems from the past, placing people and events in a context of time and place
- distinguish cause, effect, sequence and correlation in historical events and issues, including the long- and short-term causal relations
- use historical and community resources to organize the sequence of historical events
- analyze the historical contexts of key events of a given time period

• **VOCABULARY**

- **Symbol** Mark, sign, or word that indicates, signifies, or is understood as representing an idea, object, or relationship.
- **Aboriginal** In addition to the definition of Aboriginal Peoples, Aboriginal refers to the first inhabitants of a given area.
- **Aboriginal Peoples** The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.
- **Community** A group of people with commonalities that may include culture, language, values and beliefs, interests, practices and ways of life, history and /or geographically defined shared space.
- **Cultural Diversity** Differences in groups having a variety of languages, ethnicities, nationalities, with in a shared space.
- **Cultural Heritage** The beliefs, customs, knowledge, values and historical experiences shared by a given group
- **Culture** The beliefs, values, socially transmitted behaviors and traditions, language, arts and other human endeavors considered together as being characteristics of a particular community, period or people.
- **First Nations** Refers to the various governments of the First Nations peoples of Canada. There are over 630 First Nations across Canada with 46 in Alberta.
- **Traditions** Beliefs, principles or ways of acting which people in a particular society or group have continued to follow for a long time, or all of the beliefs, principles or ways of acting in a particular group or society.

LESSON PLANS

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this activity is to prepare students to think about symbols, what they are, and how they communicate ideas and culture. The *Reading the Symbols* program begins with a discussion about what symbols are and this activity is designed to prepare students for that discussion.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Ask students about what a symbol is. Is a symbol merely a picture of something? What can a symbol represent? Does a symbol have to look like the thing it is representing?
2. Then ask students to brainstorm symbols they are familiar with. Discuss different categories of symbols by what they communicate or represent. Symbols can represent:
 - a. Religions: the Christian cross, the Islamic crescent, etc.
 - b. Sports: team logos, league logos.
 - c. Countries: flags, the Maple Leaf, etc.
 - d. Politics: symbols for peace, anarchy, Communism, Naziism, political parties, etc.
 - e. Companies: logos like MacDonald's, Nike, Nintendo (and Mario), Disney (and Mickey Mouse), etc.
 - f. Instructions: washroom signs, warning signs, no smoking signs, etc.
 - g. Mathematics: symbols for addition, subtractions, multiplication, division, etc.
 - h. Can your students come up with more symbols or categories?
3. Do a symbol scavenger hunt: Have students find and draw the symbols they can find in the classroom. This may be a definite number (e.g.: find three, find four, etc.) or however many they can find in a set amount of time. This can include symbols that the students are wearing and can be found on their possessions.
4. Give students a chance to share some of the symbols they found and discuss how many symbols are around us every day.

5. Discuss with your students about whether they would be able to understand all these symbols if they were from a different culture. Would they recognize what the Calgary Flames or Calgary Stampeders logo was supposed to represent, for example? Would a symbol like the Maple Leaf mean something different to a Canadian than it would to a non-Canadian? If there are immigrant students in the class, this may be a good opportunity for them to share their experience learning Canadian symbols, if they are willing.
6. Share with your students how they are going to the Glenbow Museum to study the symbols of the Blackfoot First Nations of Alberta. They will learn how professionals at the museum use symbols to help them understand a culture and the artifacts it produces.

POST-VISIT ACTIVITY

PURPOSE

This activity allows students to reflect on their experience in the *Reading the Symbols* by sharing the symbols that are important to them and their own culture.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Instruct students to pick an object from home with a symbol on it that is important to them. It may be an object/symbol from any of the categories you discussed before (e.g.: religion, sports, country, company, etc.).
2. The following class, give students an opportunity to “show and tell” about their symbol and why it is important to them.

OUR COLLECTIONS

<http://www.glenbow.org/collections/>