



Canada's Constitutional Evolution

An essay using the *Canada in the Making* site

Teacher Guide

The history of the written Canadian Constitution is a process that could be described as being evolutionary. Sometimes, dramatic events have spurred changes in legislation, which have in turn shaped future events. Ultimately, this led to the Constitution that Canadians enjoy today. This major essay will give students the opportunity to analyze major constitutional document and the events surrounding them. In doing so they will examine primary sources (historical documents) and draw conclusions from evidence.

Subject/Grade

Social Studies (History) and Language Arts
Ages 17 and up

Overview

This is an essay requiring that students become familiar with several documents relevant to different themes in Canada's constitutional history. It can be an independent or group activity and will require multiple sessions online to complete.

Note that the sources used in ECO can be printed from the browser and then photocopied.

Outcomes (WCP, APEF) Expectations (ON) Objectives (QC)

See the [table and the summaries](#) for each province.

Materials/Resources Required

Computers with Internet access.
(Extension) Coloured card/paper for timeline, and paper backing.

Links

Early Canadiana Online: *Canada in the Making*
<http://www.canadiana.org/>
Essay writing resources can be found in the *Writing An Essay* unit on ECO:
URL: http://www.canadiana.org/eco/lesson_plans/topicconc.htm
Other links can be found in the Student Work Sheet.

Previous Knowledge

Students will need

- An understanding of Web navigation symbols, tools and terminology, particularly the tools used in ECO.
- Familiarity with research and essay writing skills.
- A basic understanding of the basic shape of Canadian history, especially from the 18th century on.

Lesson Opener

Ask students what the biggest issue in governing Canada is today. Possibilities include: separatism, regionalism, division of powers between levels of government, etc. Discuss:

- How long do they think the issue has existed?
- How did this problem come about?

Draw them to the conclusion that the issues we face today have deep roots that can be traced back in history.

Procedure

Step 1

Hand out Student Work Sheets and introduce students to the *ECO Canada In the Making* Web site. Read the assignment and discuss.

Step 2

Students search for the required information for each document. They should discuss answers and try to make balanced comments about each of the documents. It may be efficient for individuals to conduct research together. Extra credit could be given for comments about the documents not specifically identified on the Student Work Sheet.

Summary

Review consensus: Considering the shape of Canada and its politics today, which document has the greatest impact on:

- The status of Quebec?
- Provincial-federal relations?
- Individual rights and freedoms?
- Other issues of interest or importance?

Evaluation

See the Suggested Rubric.

Homework/Extension

Individuals or groups could prepare a timeline of documents or events in Canada's constitutional history.



Canada's Constitutional Evolution

An essay using the *Canada in the Making* site

Student Guide

The history of the written Canadian Constitution is a process that could be described as being evolutionary. Sometimes, dramatic events have spurred changes in legislation, which have in turn shaped future events. Ultimately, this led to the Constitution that Canadians enjoy today. This major essay will give you the opportunity to analyze major constitutional document and the events surrounding them. In doing so you will examine primary sources (historical documents) and draw conclusions from evidence.

You will examine several or all of the constitutional documents from the list below and examine the effect each had on a specific theme- or issue in Canadian constitutional history.

Step 1: Chose a theme.

You are invited to choose a theme from the list below, or use one approved by your teacher:

- Aboriginal rights
- Individual rights and freedoms
- The status of Quebec and French Canadians
- French Canadian nationalism
- Provincial-federal division of powers
- Independence from Britain

Step 2: Select documents.

Select four to six documents of the major constitutional documents available through the *Canada in the Making* site that had the most impact on the issues/groups touched by your theme.

1. The **Articles of Capitulation**, Montreal, 1760
URL: http://www.canadiana.org/citm/themes/constitution/constitution5_e.html
2. The **Royal Proclamation, 1763**:
URL: http://www.canadiana.org/citm/themes/constitution/constitution6_e.html
3. The **Quebec Act, 1774**:
URL: http://www.canadiana.org/citm/themes/constitution/constitution7_e.html
4. The **Constitutional Act, 1791**:
URL: http://www.canadiana.org/citm/themes/constitution/constitution8_e.html
5. The **Union Act, 1840**:
URL: http://www.canadiana.org/citm/themes/constitution/constitution11_e.html
6. The **British North America Act, 1867**:
URL: http://www.canadiana.org/citm/themes/constitution/constitution13_e.html

7. The *Statute of Westminster, 1931*:
URL: http://www.canadiana.org/citm/themes/constitution/constitution15_e.html
8. The *Constitution Act, 1982*:
URL: http://www.canadiana.org/citm/themes/constitution/constitution16_e.html
9. The *Meech Lake Accord* of 1987 and the *Charlottetown Accord* of 1992:
URL: http://www.canadiana.org/citm/themes/constitution/constitution16_e.html

Step 3: Conduct research.

For each of the documents, you will need to research and include information on all of the following, as applicable:

- **Briefly describe events surrounding the document, and the primary issue it was meant to address.**
For example, was the document intended to establish the rule of law over a captured territory or was it meant to unify the British North American provinces into one nation?
- **How does the document affect the issues/groups touched by your theme?**
Would groups affected have thought it was in their interests or against them? Would any groups be offended? Was the effect lasting? Does it still have an impact today?
- **Based on the historical trends you find in your research, what do you think might be the next step in Canadian constitutional history?**

Essay Requirements

The paper should be _____ words long. It should contain:

- A title page with the title, your name, the course name, your teacher's name and the date submitted.
- A clear introduction with a thesis statement.
- Proper citation (footnotes/endnotes or APA/MLA style, as determined by your teacher).
- A bibliography.

Make an effort to use primary sources to support your arguments. These can be found on the *Canada in the Making* Web site.

Note on Sources

Primary sources

Primary sources represent the most authentic resources that historians can draw upon. The documents that you will be using below may be digitized, but are still considered primary sources. Try to use the sources available on the "Canada's Constitutional History" portion of the *Canada in the Making* Web site to strengthen your arguments.

For tips on how to use primary sources, go to the "Using Primary Sources in Your Work" page.
URL: http://www.canadian.org/citm/guide/essay_e.html

Secondary sources

Secondary sources are works that interpret or analyze an historical event or phenomenon. Generally the author is at least one step removed from the event. Although not as authentic as primary sources, secondary sources are still valuable.

Possible Sources of Information Online

Note: It is important to choose sources that are produced by reputable institutions or individuals. Such information is more likely to give you a balanced, neutral view and be prepared or reviewed by experts.

Canada in the Making: Canada's Constitutional History

URL: http://www.canadiana.org/citm/themes/constitution1_e.html

The Canadian Encyclopedia

URL: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com>

National Archives of Canada: *Canada's Constitutional Evolution*

URL: http://www.archives.ca/05/051103_f.html (French)

URL: http://www.archives.ca/05/051103_e.html (English)

Solon Law Archives: *Canadian Constitutional Documents*

URL: <http://www.solon.org/Constitutions/Canada/>



Canada's Constitutional Evolution Suggested Rubric

Application of Conventions (Mechanics) (Language Arts)

Uses correct spelling, grammar and punctuation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Follows format of a formal essay (title page, double-spaced, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	5		

Organization of Ideas (Language Arts)

Has a clear and captivating introduction with a thesis statement	0	1	2	3				
Logical organization	0	1	2	3	4	5		
Has proper annotation and bibliography	0	1	2	3	4	5		

Communication of Knowledge (Social Studies/History) Communication (Language Arts)

Examines topic from perspective chosen, and stays on topic	0	1	2	3	4	5					
Supports argument well using different sources	0	1	2	3	4	5					
Demonstrates an understanding of the issues	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Understanding of Concepts (Social Studies/History) Reasoning (Language Arts)

Has a clear and logical conclusion that makes a reasoned statement about topic	0	1	2	3	4	5			
--	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--

Essay Total: /50