

Strangers in a New Land

Lesson Overview:

The main purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the realities faced by immigrants to Canada. Their first impressions of a new country helped shape their resolve to survive through the severe conditions many found once they arrived in western Canada.

Grade Level:

Grade 8

Time Required:

Teachers should be able to conduct the lesson in one class.

Curriculum Connection (Province and course):

Saskatchewan – Social Studies: "Topic Nine: Canada - A Nation of Immigrants"

Link to Canadian National Geography Standards:**Essential Element #1:** The World in Spatial Terms

- Distribution of major human and physical features at country and global scales

Essential Element #2: Places and Regions

- Changes in places and regions over time

Essential Element #4: Human Systems

- Population density, distribution, and growth rates
- Human migration patterns
- Transportation and communication networks in Canada

Essential Element #6: The Uses of Geography

- Effects of physical and human geographic factors on major historic events

Geographic Skill #2: Acquiring Geographic Information

- Use maps to collect and/or compile geographic information.

Geographic Skill #4: Analyzing Geographic Information

- Use statistics and other quantitative techniques to evaluate geographic information

Geographic Skill #5: Answering Geographic Questions

- Make generalizations and assess their validity.

Link to Statistics Canada data source:

Referring to the StatCan table:

“Population and growth components (1851-2001 Censuses)”
Students will be able to compare the population statistics over several years.

<http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/demo03.htm?sdi=population%20growth%20components>

Additional Resources, Materials and Equipment Required:

- Students Handouts:
 1. Early Years in Canada
 2. The Pioneer Spirit
 3. Population Growth and Components (1851-2001 Censuses)
 - Set of atlases / wall map of the world

Main Objective:

To help students learn from first hand experiences of immigrants about the hardships and triumphs of moving to a new country and learning new languages and customs.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Empathize with people moving to a new country that is very different from their own
- Work cooperatively in small groups to interpret and compile information
- Read first hand accounts of settlers in Saskatchewan.
- Identify where Pier 21 is and explain its importance to immigration in 20th century Canada.
- Interpret data from a table.
- Compose a letter as a form of response.

The Lesson:

	Teacher Activity	Student Activity
Introduction	<p>Read the background information on immigration in Canada and the role Pier 21 played in welcoming and dispersing immigrants to all parts of the country. http://www.pier21.ca/manulife/fioule/pier21history.pdf</p> <p>Have questions ready to ask the large group, such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What would it have been like to leave your home and travel to a new country? 2. Would it be easy learning a new language? How many in this class have tried to learn a new language? Did you find it easy or hard? 3. What would be some of the challenges that Svend had to face during that first winter in Canada? 	<p>Form groups of four.</p> <p>Using an atlas, each group will identify the following places on a world map / Canada map / Saskatchewan map: Denmark, London, England, Saint John, NB, and Carlyle, SK.</p> <p>Selected student(s) or the teacher will read “Early Years in Canada” to the class while you follow the route from Denmark to Saskatchewan.</p> <p>Participate in a large group discussion examining some of the issues that immigrants had to face when arriving in a new country with a new language, customs and climate.</p>
Lesson Development	<p>Teachers are to be familiar with the jigsaw cooperative learning strategy.</p> <p>The lesson offers the opportunity for the students to examine first hand accounts of settling on the land in Saskatchewan. They will be organized into home-base groups where each will be assigned a part of the handout “Pioneer Spirit”</p> <p>Have the students examine the chart “Population and Growth Components” and answer the questions within their home-base groups. Share their findings with the class.</p>	<p>In jigsaw fashion each member will be assigned part of the handout.</p> <p>Form expert groups representing each part where the dialogue is performed. Then as a group, answer the questions found on your handout “The Pioneer Spirit”.</p> <p>After finalizing the answers, regroup back into your home-base groups and share your findings/experiences. Within your home-base groups, examine the handout “Population and Growth Components” and explore the questions on the sheet.</p>
Conclusion	<p>Students will be expected to share their discoveries with their home-base groups as well as given an opportunity to share how they feel about what life was like for either Svend or Greta. (Emphasis should be directed towards leaving family and friends in another country, learning a new language, feeling the need to make new friends, enduring hardships when “going home” was not an option, etc.)</p>	<p>Share your findings with a larger group being encouraged to share their feelings about what life was like for immigrants to Canada.</p> <p>Final assignment: Imagine you were Svend or Greta. Write a letter home describing your first month in Canada (share your new discoveries along with the struggles you are experiencing).</p>

Lesson Extension:

- Go to Pier 21 website and read about other immigrants and their experiences.
- Find out why Pier 21 became such a significant place in Canadian history.

Assessment of Student Learning:

Collect the final writing assignments. If writing portfolios are kept then have students chose if they want this letter included in their portfolio.

Further Reading:

<http://www.pier21.ca/manulife/file/pier21history.pdf>

Early Years In Canada: As recalled by Svend A. Jensen, an emigrant from Denmark

The winter of 1928 -1929 was spent at Hasleve Folkenhojskole (Folk High School) at Sjaelland in Denmark. I was enrolled in the Udvandrer (emigrant) class, which was supposed to prepare us for life in Canada. We studied the English language, Canadian history, geography and other subjects. Our English language teacher had spent some time in England. To this day I remember he said, "Svend, you will never learn English".

In 1929, immigration to Canada was beginning to close. It had already closed to the United States. Only young men with farm experience were allowed to enter Canada. Eight from our class received permission to emigrate.

Our English language teacher was our tour guide. Like tour guides today, his trip was provided for, at no cost to him.

We left Denmark in late April. Snow covered the ground and it was cold. Our first stop was in England where the grass was green and cows were out in the fields. It was spring -- what a contrast!

We spent two days in London. From there we traveled to Liverpool where we departed for Canada on an ocean liner. We landed in Saint John, New Brunswick after eight days on a stormy sea with gale conditions. It was a rough crossing.

At Saint John we boarded a train to go part way across Canada, a vast country so unlike Denmark. Our first stop was in Winnipeg, Manitoba. From there we traveled to our destination, a Danish community at Redvers, Saskatchewan. It took four days and nights to complete the journey from Saint John.

We, eight classmates, were separated at Redvers. Two of us, Tom and myself (we had been friends since we were ten years old), worked on neighboring farms about three miles apart.

I came to a farm about ten miles from Carlyle, Saskatchewan. The farmer was Irish and his wife was an ex-school teacher from England. She enjoyed teaching the English language, which was most beneficial for me. Tom worked for a Scottish couple.

My first job in the morning was to feed, curry and harness eleven horses and milk six cows. The farmer had other chores.

In the field I was in command of five horses instead of the one or two when I was in Denmark. It was a surprise to learn I could sit on the plow instead of walking

behind the horses all day as we did in Denmark. Another surprise -- I had never seen such a big field in one piece -- one round was about one mile.

The wages were twenty-five dollars a month. A full experienced farm hand received thirty dollars a month.

Being an emigrant I had no social life. However, the farmer did provide me with a saddle horse so I could visit my friend, Tom, on Sunday afternoons.

This was my first experience with an inland climate. It was hot, day and night during the summer and into late fall. One very warm, calm day in late fall I could barely stay awake while plowing in the field. The next morning, much to my surprise, there was two feet of snow on the ground. Summer to winter overnight -- plowing in the field one day to hauling grain by sleigh to the elevator (a round trip of twenty miles) the next day. It was incredible! It never warmed up until the spring. Temperatures hovered around minus twelve degrees Celsius to about minus forty all winter. The roads were blocked with snow. There were no snowplows to clear the roads.

During my first winter in Canada I worked for an Irish couple in the same district. It was an exceptionally cold winter with lots of snow. My work consisted of hauling feed every day for the horses and cattle that were kept in the barn because of the severe cold weather. In Western Canada it is usually possible for animals to be outside part of the day as we have a dry cold but that winter was just too severe. The snow was so deep it covered the fences so there were no gates to open when I was hauling feed. It was just a great white landscape.

The farmer seldom came outside. He spent his days sitting in front of the kitchen stove with his feet resting on the oven door, chewing tobacco and spitting it into the coal pail beside him. I did have a nice warm room with good bedding and the food was excellent. I only had one day off from work all winter.

Christmas came. Christmas evening was like any other evening in the week. I thought about the Christmas festivities in Denmark while I was doing the chores. This couple celebrated Christmas Day and then it was all over. No more Christmas for another year. I was not impressed with the plum pudding, which I had never eaten before.

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I could go into more detail but the reader may tire of all this rambling. My experiences were no different than thousands of people who came to Canada in the early years. The benefactor of immigration was CPR (Canadian Pacific Railways). They made money selling passages and land. I remember an advertisement showing the experimental farm east of Calgary. The reader

received the impression that one could have a farm like this after a few years of working in Canada.

Now that I am retired, I enjoy working with stained glass art, soapstone and woodcarving. We also look forward to visiting our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

I can't say I am sorry I came to Canada. It is a beautiful country with good opportunities. It has been an interesting life. I don't know what it would have been like if I had stayed in Denmark.

Source: http://www.pier21.ca/Immigrant - Jensen_Svend_A.3293.0.html

The Pioneer Spirit

This couple, Pete and Greta, met in Haarlem, Holland shortly after the war's end. Pete had signed up for occupation forces in Germany. They wanted to get married, but Pete got sick, and their papers got lost. So Pete returned to Canada in May 1946. Greta followed him a year later and they were married in Western Canada.

Pete had a job with the Saskatchewan Government, clearing land. His work was in an area where a great deal of bush had been burned, and the Saskatchewan government decided to break this up to settle Veterans.

Part 1

Their first house was 12-24 feet. It was made out of rough lumber and built on skids, without storm doors or windows. It had one door, and the whole inside was made of rough lumber, without a ceiling. They were in the middle of nowhere, so of course they had no electricity, no water, or inside conveniences. There were only three other houses around and in one of them lived an English war bride. For drinking water they filled a pail with ice from the river nearby. For washing water they dug holes, and they would fill them with water.

In 1947 more veterans came, and the government announced they were going to establish co-op farms in that area. After a lot of political hassles, they were able to join a co-op farm.

Greta learned about pioneering the hard way. The different food and living conditions were such a change from the comfortable home she was used to in Holland. But she loved her hard-working husband very much and she was a determined girl. She became pregnant right away and was sick throughout her pregnancy.

In January her little son was born prematurely. She was alone in the little cabin in the bush, and had only a neighbor to help her. The baby was very tiny. She used to lay it on the open oven door of the big old woodstove, so it would be nice and warm. This had been quite an experience for a city girl. But she got used to the way of life in the bush. Her husband, like all the other husbands, would be away in the bush to cut wood. He would be gone for days on end, and sometimes weeks. When her second son was born under the same conditions, she was more or less prepared.



Questions:

1. Describe in your own words what their first home was like. If you could change one thing about their house what would it be?
2. What would have been the greatest differences between living in Holland and in Saskatchewan?
3. What would be some of the concerns a new mother would have raising a family under these conditions?

The Pioneer Spirit

Part 2

They started farming in 1949 and had a pretty good crop. Pete worked in the bush for the winter. The following year their crop was burned, so they had to live on what Pete made during the winter. But she was always able to make ends meet. She was happy with her little family, but she had her lonely moments.

In 1952 they quit the co-op farm, but the government had to leave them the land, as was arranged, so they started farming on their own on two quarter sections. These were hard times for her and she lost weight and became very nervous. Some of the people around her were used to hardships, they had gone through the dirty thirties (Depression time) in Canada. At that time she also received word from Holland that her father had died, another shock she had to endure.



The Department of Natural Resources offered Pete a job at a fire lookout tower, and he took it. So then it looked as if they were going to be on easy street for a while. But snow came in October, and that was the end of that job for that year. It was strictly a summer job. They were lucky that they could stay for free in the house connected to the tower. It was not too far from Pete's next job as a faller (falling trees). That winter Greta and the kids stayed alone all week and Pete would come out of the bush on weekends. In the summer he would work at the tower again.

When her boy had to start school, Greta and the kids went back to the farm, which was not producing at that time. But life was comfortable, and they were able to buy some more machinery for the farm.

That year they bought their first vehicle, a 1933 Chevrolet. They paid \$50 for it, and were very proud of it. On one of their trips to Winnipeg, they lost a wheel off the car and had a great distance to walk into town, Pete rolling the wheel along. Greta was so happy to see the city lights again after such a long time. But things were getting better all the time and now they had a 1941 Ford, which they traded later for a tractor they badly needed for the farm.

Questions:

1. What were some of the hardships that Greta had to face? Which would be the hardest for her at this time in her life? Explain why.
2. List the things that they were thankful for. If you were to list them from the most important to the least what would be the top three? Explain the reasons for your choices.

The Pioneer Spirit

Part 3

Things continued improving and one day Pete came home with a Model A Ford. Greta learned to drive this car and really enjoyed it and had lots of fun. The roads were bad in their area and at one point in the road, she would always have to get out and guide the car over a bridge. It was broken and only two planks were left and the wheels had to be exactly on those planks, otherwise you would go through it. Quite an experience, but when you're young, you can do anything.

She had a little girl a year later, in the hospital this time. Life was not too bad for a while, and they were grateful for all they had. When her last son was born, Greta had blood poisoning and was lucky to make it to the hospital, with the help of a neighbour.

They changed land in 1956 and moved the house to this new quarter. They had built on rooms as their family expanded. On one of these moves they lost their front porch. The land didn't produce much, as it was very heavy clay. It needed nitrogen, so Pete put clover and alfalfa in as much as he could, but the weather didn't co-operate. So they had very little result for all their hard work.



They lived mostly on the money Pete made during the winter. Greta had a garden, but she didn't know much about gardening and the first summer the weather was so dry that it didn't produce much. They had some harvest that first year at the new farm and cleared \$235. But Pete was still working at the Tower and they were able to buy a piece of land to build on.

Questions:

1. Describe day-to-day problems that settlers had to face when the roads were bad.
2. How important were the crops to part-time farmers such as Pete and Greta? What would it mean for them if their crops "failed"?
3. How important was Pete's job at the Fire Tower?

The Pioneer Spirit

Part 4

A year or so later they bought an old farmhouse and moved it onto the lot. The farm finally started to produce and Pete worked at the garage in the village. Greta had a job now at the Township Office. In 1960 they built onto the house, Pete doing all the carpenter work himself. In that same year they got electricity and running water for the first time. They also had a gas furnace installed. They had all these luxuries now and there was more to come. The whole family was very excited when they got their first electric cook stove with a window in the oven, and they would all watch the burners glow. Also a brand new refrigerator was added.

Greta had a busy life in those days. She had four kids, a husband, and a job. She was also involved in many local activities and community affairs. In 1967 she decided to take a two-year University course by mail in Local Government Management. In 1969 she landed a much better job, so she went on alone, rented a suite and worked at her job.

Pete was still at the farm and tried to work it alone, and keep his job on the side, which was too much for him. He had contracted malaria in Italy during the War and he had a bad attack while alone at the farm, and that scared him. They then decided to rent out the farm and move to where Greta was working.

The children all had a good education, and three of them were married now. Later they sold the farm and bought a lot. Pete built the basement, and a ready-built house was moved on to it. Hard work and determination were qualities both Pete and Greta had in abundance.

Today they are still happy and both working. Greta is still in the same office. They enjoy working on their house and have a good life together. They see their children and grandchildren only a couple of times a year, because they are living a long distance away. Greta has a brother and sister living in Holland, and some day she hopes to go back and visit them.

Questions:

1. Describe the changes in their lifestyle once electricity, running water and a gas furnace were introduced into their home.
2. With all the dangers of working alone why would Pete feel it was important to maintain the farm and his part-time job when Greta was working at a good job in the township?
3. Why are “hard work and determination” important qualities for people starting a new life in a new country?

Population and growth components (1851-2001 Censuses)						
	<u>Census population at the end of period</u>	<u>Total population growth¹</u>	<u>Births</u>	<u>Deaths</u>	<u>Immigration</u>	<u>Emigration</u>
Period	thousands					
1851-1861	3,230	793	1,281	670	352	170
1861-1871	3,689	459	1,370	760	260	410
1871-1881	4,325	636	1,480	790	350	404
1881-1891	4,833	508	1,524	870	680	826
1891-1901	5,371	538	1,548	880	250	380
1901-1911	7,207	1,836	1,925	900	1,550	740
1911-1921	8,788	1,581	2,340	1,070	1,400	1,089
1921-1931	10,377	1,589	2,415	1,055	1,200	970
1931-1941	11,507	1,130	2,294	1,072	149	241
1941-1951 ²	13,648	2,141	3,186	1,214	548	379
1951-1956	16,081	2,433	2,106	633	783	185
1956-1961	18,238	2,157	2,362	687	760	278
1961-1966	20,015	1,777	2,249	731	539	280
1966-1971 ³	21,568	1,553	1,856	766	890	427
1971-1976	23,450	1,488	1,760	824	1,053	358
1976-1981	24,820	1,371	1,820	843	771	278
1981-1986	26,101	1,281	1,872	885	678	278
1986-1991	28,031	1,930	1,933	946	1,164	213
1991-1996	29,611	1,580	1,936	1,024	1,118	338
1996-2001	31,021	1,410	1,705	1,089	1,217	376

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population.
Last modified: 2005-01-28.

For more statistical information, consult [2001 Census](#).

Questions:

1. What three consecutive decades saw the greatest number of immigrants enter Canada? What were some push/pull factors that would explain this increase?
2. The decade from 1931 to 1941 saw the lowest number of immigrants? What might be some possible reasons for this?