

# National Flag of Canada

February 15<sup>th</sup>

## Teacher's lesson plan – High School



**Duration:** 1-2 Classes

**Materials:** Student Hand-outs (x4), Discussion/Assignment Sheet, Web Links

**Objective:** By the end of this lesson, students will understand the importance of flags, the history of Canada's flag, the Great Flag Debate of 1964-65.

### **Introduction:**

- Ask students: **What do flags represent?** (Identity, unity, history, culture, etc)
- Show images of different flags (Provincial, civic, corporate, personal flags)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Canadian\\_flags](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Canadian_flags)
- Discuss the symbolic importance of flags in national/cultural identity.

### **Research:**

- Read through four reading hand-outs.
- Lead a discussion with your students, using questions printed on hand-out.

### **Student Assignment:**

- Using AI (we suggest Chat GPT), students find answers to questions printed on assignment sheet. Students can work in groups, focus on one question and share answers with the rest of the class using a document camera or mini-presentation. Other students write down their answers.

### **Assessment & Homework:**

- Exit Slip – each student writes a response to: **What does the Canadian Flag mean to me?**
- Optional – Design a flag for your school, town or family

### **Video Learning Resources:**

1. National Flag of Canada Day, Feb 15<sup>th</sup> (No Audio)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7cr8D27j6U&t=5s>
2. Canadian Flag Collection, at SR&T (Argyle, MB)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMhaOyjNfwc>
3. Lowering CR Ensign & Raising Canada Flag, Feb 15, 1965  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6NGnVgl75o>
4. Canada Starts to produce new flag (1965)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtL\\_Dhufmw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtL_Dhufmw)
5. Heritage Minutes: Flags  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikY7bMDVQTg>

**Does your town, region or school have its own unique flag?**

**Research online to find images.**

**If not, design one with your class.**

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*Class Discussions – High School*



## 1. What do flags represent?

- National Identity:** National flags represent the people, culture, and history of a country.
- Unity and Pride:** Flags can symbolize the unity of a group, whether it's a country or an organization, evoking a sense of pride and belonging.
- Historical Significance:** The design of a flag may reflect significant historical events, movements, or important national symbols.
- Political or Social Movements:** Flags can also represent specific ideologies, movements, or causes. For example, flags with certain colors or symbols may represent struggles for civil rights or independence.
- Territorial Boundaries:** Flags can define geographical areas, like a provincial, cities or communities, signifying their jurisdiction.

## 2. There were several versions of the Canadian Red Ensign (between 1868-1965). Why did it change so much?

- Each time a new province entered confederation; their provincial coat of arms was added to the CRE. By 1921, with 9 provinces, the flag became "too cluttered" and the government instead used the Canadian Coat of Arms. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian\\_Red\\_Ensign](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_Red_Ensign)

## 3. Which one of the Canadian flag proposals (1868-1965) do you like best? Explain why.

- <https://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/ca!.html>

## 4. Besides the national & provincial, what other flags are used in Canada?

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Canadian\\_flags](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Canadian_flags)

Open Discussions:

## 5. The Canadian Flag's design doesn't represent any specific people or sub-region of the country. How is this neutral symbolism a strength for all Canadians?

## 6. Why is it important that we show respect to the national flag?



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*Class Assignment – High School*

1. Why were the first flags used in Canada from European countries?
2. Why did Canada use a British Merchant Ensign for its first flag in 1868?
3. Why did most early Canadian flags contain British symbols?
4. Explain why Canadian veterans opposed a new flag in 1964.
5. The Canadian flag was not created by one person alone. Explain how the following people contributed to our current national flag:
  - a) George Stanley
  - b) Jacques St. Cyr
  - c) Joan O'Malley
6. What flag etiquette could your school or family improve upon? Explain why respecting the flag is important to Canadians



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*Class Assignment – High School*

**ANSWER KEY**



## **7. Why were the first flags used in Canada from European countries?**

In the past, European countries were in a race with each other to colonize “new lands”. When they arrived in these areas, they used their existing national or royal flags to claim the land for their country. Because Canada was not an independent country until 1867, foreign countries used their own flags to show authority and ownership of present-day Canada.

## **8. Why did Canada use a British Merchant Ensign for its first flag in 1868?**

It was easy to re-purpose these very common and easy to find flags. Designers simply took one from a British Merchant ship and added the coats of arms from the original four provinces of Canada.

## **9. Why did most early Canadian flags contain British symbols?**

Early members of the Canadian government were born in Britain or had strong British ancestry. At the time, they felt it was natural to include these symbols in Canadian flags because of their personal link to Britain. The United Kingdom was also the world superpower at the time, and our new country wanted to align ourselves with Britain by using their symbols on flags.

## **10. Explain why Canadian veterans opposed a new flag in 1964.**

Veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces fought during WWI and WWII using the Canadian Red Ensign as a national symbol. It flew at army camps and was printed on uniforms and badges. Twenty years after WWII, they felt strongly that the government was taking away the symbol of Canada, for which they fought. During the Great Flag Debate, a concession was made that the Royal Union Flag (Union Jack) would be maintained as Canada’s 2<sup>nd</sup> official flag.

**11. The Canadian flag was not created by one person alone. Explain how the following people contributed to our current national flag:**

- d) **George Stanley** suggested to the Flag Committee a flag with a single maple leaf, and two red bars – similar to that used by the Royal Military College, Kingston, ON. Stanley was the Dean of Arts at the college from 1962-69.
  
- e) **Jacques St. Cyr** a graphic designer who took the maple leaf chosen by the Flag Committee and simplified/stylized the leaf design to what we know today. Ironically, he was a Quebec Nationalist, and yet is credited for his important design role creating a national Canadian symbol.
  
- f) **Joan O'Malley** In November 1964, she was a seamstress asked to sew a full-sized example of the new Canadian Flag, so Prime Minister Pearson could see it flying on a pole. At the time, this sewing job was done secretly, she only years later did she know the full extent of her role sewing the first flag for Canada. The sewing machine she used is now held in the Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, PQ.

**12. What flag etiquette could your school or family improve upon? Explain why respecting the flag is important to Canadians.**

Flag etiquette is important to show respect for our national symbol. A torn flag, or improperly displayed flag can be offensive to Canadians. See list of flag etiquette to see if your school or home follows the rules.