



Voices Past and Present

Level: Grades 8-12, QC Secondary II-V, CEGEP

Time: 60-90 minutes

Overview

In this lesson, students will discover more about the key figures they encountered during the virtual experience of Centre Block. The lesson begins with a game that helps students identify the roles and duties of different people at Parliament. They will then investigate the stories behind trailblazing parliamentarians, reflecting on their work and impact.

Inquiry Question

How do parliamentarians represent Canadians?

Learning Outcomes

Students learn about the role of key figures at Parliament and how they represent the interests of Canadians.

Curriculum Links

Students will be able to:

- Explain and analyze the role of parliamentarians
- Describe the processes used to select parliamentarians
- Compare and contrast the role of Senators and Members of the House of Commons
- Explain the role of the media in Canada's parliamentary system
- Develop an understanding of parliamentary and Canadian history

Competencies

Students will:

- Develop historical thinking skills
- Develop critical thinking skills
- Develop media literacy skills
- Ask respectful and relevant questions
- Plan and perform complex searches using digital sources
- Apply the research process
- Demonstrate decision-making and problem-solving skills

Materials & Setup

- [Voices Past and Present PowerPoint presentation](#)
- Computer and projector (optional)
- [Who am I? worksheet](#) (optional)
- [Profile worksheet](#)
- Computers, smartphones, or other devices with internet access for students (optional)

Minds on

(10 minutes)

Step 1: Show students the PowerPoint slide with the Centre Block floorplan. Ask students if they can recall any of the key people highlighted in each section of the virtual experience of Centre Block. Write down their answers on the board, which may include the following:

Section	People
Confederation Hall	Speaker of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Commons
House of Commons Foyer	Journalists, Members of the House of Commons
House of Commons Chamber	Speaker, Members of the House of Commons (government and opposition), Prime Minister
Library of Parliament	Monarch (Queen Victoria)
Senate Foyer	Monarch, Governor General
Senate Chamber	Speaker, Senators
Peace Tower	All of the above

Step 2: Run the *Who am I?* game using either the *Voices Past and Present* [PowerPoint presentation](#) or the [worksheet](#).

Step 3: Instruct students to choose the role that best matches the description, based on the list they created in **Step 1**. (E.g. Question: I am elected by Canadians to represent a constituency. Answer: Member of the House of Commons.) Go through the answers as a class (see the [answer key](#) for guidance).

Activity

(30 minutes)

Step 1: Have students find a historical parliamentary figure to research in more detail. Some suggestions include:

- Lincoln Alexander, first Black Cabinet Minister and first Black Member of the House of Commons
- James Gladstone, first First Nations Senator
- Sir Wilfrid Laurier, first francophone Prime Minister
- Agnes Macphail, first female Member of the House of Commons
- Jeanne Sauvé, first female Governor General and first female Speaker of the House of Commons
- Cairine Wilson, first female Senator

Step 2: Distribute the [profile worksheet](#) to each student. Have students complete **Section 1** of the worksheet by selecting and researching their key figure. They may want to consult online resources such as [PARLINFO](#), [The Canadian Encyclopedia](#), [Dictionary of Canadian Biography](#), etc. If no student internet access is available, you may want to print off biographies from one of the sources listed above.

Consolidation

(20 minutes)

Step 1: Ask a few volunteers to present their profiles to the class, outlining who their person is and 4-5 highlights from their life and work. Write the names of these key individuals on the board.

Step 2: Based on the information presented by their classmates, have students complete **Section 2** of the worksheet with their interview questions. If time allows, you may want students to pose some of their questions to the class.

Assessment

Step 3: Have students hand in their profile worksheet for assessment. Use the online sources listed above to help evaluate their work.

Online Teaching Tips

- **Minds on:** During an online group chat or using an online discussion forum, show or post the floorplan of Centre Block from the PowerPoint presentation (**Step 1**). Ask each student to name one key person they encountered in the virtual experience and identify in which room they encountered this person. Then ask students to download, complete and submit the [Who am I? worksheet](#) for initial assessment.

- **Activity:** Instruct students to complete **Section 1** of the [profile worksheet](#) per the instructions in **Steps 1-2**. Once students have completed the first part of the worksheet, have them post a photo and condensed bio (4-5 key points) of their chosen person to a class discussion forum. Alternatively, they can upload this information to a shared classroom drive or Google Doc.
- **Consolidation:** Ask students to go through their classmates' posted biographies and fill out **Section 2** of the profile worksheet. Have students submit the completed worksheet for final assessment.

Enhancements

- Ask students to research the answers to the questions they outlined in **Section 2** to see if they can learn more about the individual's life, work and experience.
- Get students to write a reflection about what job they would like to have at Parliament and why, explaining the duties and qualities required to carry out this role.
- Instruct students to research a current Governor General, Speaker, Senator, or Member of the House of Commons, filling out the profile worksheet for these individuals.
- Ask students to create a job advertisement for one of the parliamentary roles, including a job description, list of qualifications, expectations for the position and time commitment.

Additional Resources

- [Who are Parliamentarians? video](#)
- [At Work in the Senate](#)
- [At Work in the House of Commons](#)
- [Governors General of Canada](#)
- [Speaker of the Senate](#)
- [Current Senators](#)
- [Prime Ministers of Canada](#)
- [Speaker of the House of Commons](#)
- [Current Members of the House of Commons](#)