



Doukhobors Make Good Canadians

This MysteryQuest examines documents about the Doukhobors in the early twentieth century around the time of the killing of their leader, Peter Verigin. Students learn to consider evidence of what it means to be a good Canadian citizen rather than relying on opinions that may be prejudicial.

A critical thinking challenge to accompany

Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History

***Explosion on the Kettle Valley Line:
The Death of Peter Verigin***

<http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/08/indexen.html>

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based on an approach developed by The Critical Thinking Consortium (TC²)

www.tc2.ca

Ages

14-16

Courses

Canadian history, social studies

Key Topics

- immigrant relations in early 20th century Canada
- religious and ethnic prejudice

Critical Challenge

Take on the persona of a member of the Doukhobor community around the time of the train explosion of 1924 and write a persuasive letter to the Minister of Immigration, arguing that Doukhobors make good Canadian citizens.

Broad Understanding

Students will learn to consider the evidence of credentials of a group's good citizenship rather than relying on opinions that may be prejudiced.

Requisite Tools



Background knowledge

- knowledge of the Doukhobors in early twentieth century and interwar Canada
- knowledge of the prejudices against the Doukhobors from different groups
- knowledge of the conflicts within the Doukhobor community



Criteria for judgment

- criteria for a good Canadian citizen (e.g., hardworking, law-abiding, peaceful, possessing high moral principles)
- criteria for good persuasive writing (e.g., clear argument, most effective counter-arguments, effective use of evidence)



Critical thinking vocabulary

- counter-argument
- persuasive



Thinking strategies

- data comparison charts



Habits of mind

- empathy
- flexible thinking

Independent Study

This lesson can be used as a self-directed activity by having students individually or in pairs work their way through the guided instructions and support material found at <http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/08/indexen.html>.

Whole Class Activities

On the following pages are suggested modifications of the self-guided procedures found on the MysteryQuest website for use with a class of students. For convenience, each support material and set of directions found on the website is reproduced next to the relevant suggestions for whole class instruction.

Suggested Activities

Preparatory materials

- Students may benefit from a vocabulary list such as the following:

aristocratic
incited
nativists
assimilate
befitting
Angliki

emulate
sacraments
orthodox
conscipation
exile

persona
secular
domicile
carouse
deprivations

Introduce the Verigin case

- Using *Introduction* as a guide, explain to students the incident and the challenge that is the focus of their investigation.

INTRODUCTION

Late in the evening of October 28, 1924, Peter Verigin boarded a Canadian Pacific Railway train at Brilliant, British Columbia, the headquarters of the Doukhobor community. About one in the morning a horrific explosion blew away the roof and sides of the coach. Verigin and eight others perished in the explosion, which investigators on the scene quickly concluded was no accident.

Known by the single name "Lordly," Peter Verigin lived like royalty among a group of Russian immigrants to Canada, the Doukhobors, whose motto was "Toil and Peaceful Life." The Doukhobors preached equality and rejected the authority of both Church and State. As a result, they were persecuted in Russia. In 1902, their leader, Peter Verigin, and many of his community came to Canada to take up a new life.

Yet they did not find peace in Canada. Doukhobor protests against what they saw as governmental interference with their religious and political freedoms involved arson, public nudity, and refusal to pay taxes or send their children to school. Because of this unusual behaviour, many regarded the Doukhobors as undesirable citizens and they were under surveillance by the RCMP. Your challenge is to try to understand the situation from the Doukhobor perspective and to explain why their actions may well be consistent with the principles and attributes of valued members of Canadian society.

- Using *The Task* as a guide, outline the activities that students will undertake.

THE TASK

In this MysteryQuest, you will take on the role of a member of the Doukhobor community that was persecuted in Canada in the early twentieth century. You will explore various historical documents to support the claim that the Doukhobors were good Canadian citizens. You will present your findings in a persuasive letter to the Minister of Immigration, arguing that in spite of what some people say, the Doukhobors are commendable citizens.

You will begin by considering the criteria for a good Canadian citizen. After reading about the Doukhobors and the many conflicts involving their community, you will take on the persona of a Doukhobor community member. Before writing your letter, you will explore selected historical documents to find the evidence to support their credentials as good Canadian citizens. As well, you will look at potential challenges to this position and develop arguments to counter these objections.

Decide on criteria for a good citizen

- Using the instructions for *Step 1: Decide on criteria for a good citizen* as a guide, brainstorm the kind of values and character traits that make an ideal citizen. From a list of seven or eight criteria, select five that include such things as hardworking, law-abiding, peaceful, and possessing high moral principles.

STEP 1: DECIDE ON CRITERIA FOR A GOOD CITIZEN

The first step in arguing that the Doukhobors in the 1920s were good Canadian citizens is to identify criteria for good citizenship. Take a moment to think of the kind of values and character traits that make an ideal citizen. These might include virtues such as hardworking, law-abiding, peaceful (rejecting violence as a solution to problems), and exhibiting integrity (living by your principles). Make a list of seven or eight criteria and select from this list five key criteria of a good Canadian citizen. Enter these criteria in the left-hand column of the chart *Evidence of Citizenship Qualities*.

Read about the historical context

- Following *Step 2: Read about the historical context* as a guide, direct students to read the three documents in the *Introduction* section of *Evidence in the Case*.

STEP 2: READ ABOUT THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Before examining documents from the time of the killing of Peter Verigin, it will be useful to learn more about the Doukhobors. Read the three documents in the "Introduction" section of *Evidence in the Case*. These selections, written by historians, offer background information explaining the conflicts Doukhobors encountered and the sequence of events from the early history of the Doukhobors to the present day.

EVIDENCE IN THE CASE

Introduction

Timeline

Conflicts Among Doukhobors and With Their Neighbours
Doukhobor Culture and Migration to Canada

Primary documents

Newspaper articles

"A Menace to the District", Grand Forks Gazette, September 14, 1912

"Attempt to Burn Doukhobor School", Grand Forks Gazette, March 30, 1923

Editorial, "Regarding Doukhobors", Oregon Daily Journal, April 15, 1924

Letters

Alex Sherstobetoff and John Koleenoff, Petition of Independent Doukhobors, July 26, 1913

J.A. Fraser, Chief Constable, to A.M. Johnson, Deputy Attorney General of British Columbia, July 22, 1919

"Open Letter from the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood to the B.C. Government", Brilliant, British Columbia, November 5, 1924

Government documents

RCMP Report on Doukhobor Conditions, March 17, 1925

RCMP Report on Doukhobor Conditions, April 11, 1925

Oral history

Nikolai Nevokshonoff, "Doukhobor Community Elders Ordered Schools Burned in 1924", Testimony to the Expanded Kootenay Committee on Intergroup Relations, October 28, 1982

Magazine article

Mrs. W. Garland Foster, "A Doomed Utopia", Saturday Night, June 14, 1924

Look for evidence

- Using *Step 3: Look for evidence* as a guide, ask students to find evidence to support the position that Doukhobors made good Canadian citizens in the early twentieth century. Instruct students to use three of the ten primary documents in their research.

STEP 3: LOOK FOR EVIDENCE

You are now ready to look for evidence to support the position that Doukhobors made good Canadian citizens in the early twentieth century. In the "Primary documents" section of *Evidence in the Case* are ten documents about the Doukhobors during the early part of the twentieth century. Select three of these documents to use as the basis for developing reasons why the Doukhobors were good citizens.

As you read each document, look for evidence that relates to the five criteria for good citizenship you selected. You are to look for evidence that suggests the Doukhobors met each criterion and also for any evidence that suggests they may not have met the criteria. For example, if being law-abiding was selected as a criterion for good citizenship, you might notice in the documents that the Doukhobors were very obedient to their leaders. You might also note in relation to being law-abiding that some Doukhobors disobeyed Canadian law.

For each document you read, use a copy of the chart *Evidence of Citizenship Qualities* to record the evidence for good citizenship (in column two) and against good citizenship (in column three). You will not necessarily find evidence in each document for and against every one of the criteria, and in some cases you will find several pieces of evidence for or against some criteria.

- Duplicate and distribute copies of *Evidence of Citizenship Qualities* to each student to record their evidence. Direct students to enter the previously discussed criteria for citizenship in the left-hand column of this chart.



MysteryQuest 8

Support Materials 1 (Activity Sheet)

Evidence of Citizenship Qualities

Name of document _____

1 Criteria for good citizenship	2 Evidence suggesting that Doukhobors were good citizens	3 Evidence suggesting that Doukhobors were NOT good citizens
<i>Law-abiding</i>	<i>Doukhobors wanted to follow the rules set by their leader</i>	<i>Some Doukhobors did not follow Canadian laws</i>

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Introduce counter-arguments

- If your students are unfamiliar with presenting counter-arguments, you may choose to have them work in pairs and, using a T-chart, on one side list all the good reasons why their parents should buy them a car. On the other side, list all the good reasons for not buying the car that their parents might give in response to their list. Ask students to suggest what they might say to counter their parents' arguments.

- Using *Step 4: Prepare counter-arguments* as a guide, introduce the idea of a counter-argument. Guide students to understand that they can strengthen their argument by considering the objections someone might have to their position on a topic and looking for evidence to challenge those objections.

STEP 4: PREPARE COUNTER-ARGUMENTS

There are two strategies for convincing others of the merits of a position. One strategy is to present all the reasons why your position is a good idea. In the case of arguing that the Doukhobors are good citizens, it means showing how their actions are consistent with the qualities of a good citizen. This is the evidence you assembled in column two of the chart *Evidence of Citizenship Qualities*.

A second strategy for convincing others is to consider the reasons that those who oppose your view might offer, and try to challenge these objections. To do this is to develop a **counter-argument**. In the case of the Doukhobors, it means looking at the evidence assembled in column three of *Evidence of Citizenship Qualities* and thinking of reasons why this evidence is damaging to your position. For example, it was suggested earlier that potential evidence against looking upon the Doukhobors as law-abiding citizens is that some of them disobeyed Canadian law. Developing counter-arguments involves thinking of reasons why this is not an important concern. You might, for example, note that not all Doukhobors broke the law, and that they did so as a last resort because of their deep commitment to religious and political principles. You could also remind your audience that the Constitution of Canada protects these kinds of basic freedoms.

Select three or four of the most important pieces of evidence against regarding the Doukhobors as good citizens, and record these on the chart *Developing Counter-Arguments*. For each of these potential objections to your position, think of one or two counter-arguments to minimize the damage they present to your position.

Write a persuasive letter

- When students have completed their charts, use *Step 5: Write a persuasive letter* as a guide to explain that they are to take on the persona of a member of the Doukhobor community in the early twentieth century and write a persuasive letter to the Minister of Immigration, arguing that Doukhobors make good Canadian citizens.

STEP 5: WRITE A PERSUASIVE LETTER

When you have examined the documents and developed a number of counter-arguments, you are now ready to write a persuasive letter to the Minister of Immigration arguing that, despite what some may think, the Doukhobors are good Canadian citizens. In preparing your letter, be sure to clearly explain your arguments (including counter-arguments) and provide evidence from the documents to support each argument. Remember to write your letter as though you are a member of the Doukhobor community writing to a government official.

Decide on criteria for a persuasive letter

- Remind students that, at that time, the Doukhobors were not well regarded in many circles. Ask them to brainstorm what they should put in their letters to persuade the minister to support their position. From a list of seven or eight criteria select three or four that include such things as: clear argument, most effective counter-arguments, and effective use of evidence.

Evaluation

- Use the rubric *Assessing Supporting and Opposing Evidence* to evaluate students' completion of the charts. Use the rubric *Assessing a Persuasive Presentation* to assess students' persuasive letters.



MysteryQuest 8 Evaluation Materials 1 (Rubric)

Assessing Supporting and Opposing Evidence

	Outstanding	Very good	Competent	Satisfactory	In-progress
Identifies supporting evidence	Identifies the most relevant supporting evidence for each criterion.	Identifies most of the relevant supporting evidence for each criterion.	Identifies some relevant supporting evidence for each criterion.	Identifies very little relevant supporting evidence for each criterion.	Identifies no relevant supporting evidence for any criterion.
Identifies opposing evidence	Identifies the most relevant opposing evidence for each criterion.	Identifies most of the relevant opposing evidence for each criterion.	Identifies some relevant opposing evidence for each criterion.	Identifies very little relevant opposing evidence for each criterion.	Identifies no relevant opposing evidence for any criterion.
Develops convincing counter-arguments	The counter-arguments for each objection are highly convincing.	The counter-arguments for each objection are generally convincing.	The counter-arguments for each objection are sometimes convincing.	The counter-arguments are occasionally plausible but not convincing.	The counter-arguments are implausible.



MysteryQuest 8 Evaluation Materials 2 (Rubric)

Assessing a Persuasive Presentation

	Outstanding	Very good	Competent	Satisfactory	In-progress
Clear arguments supported with evidence	Arguments are very clearly presented and thoroughly supported with very convincing evidence.	Arguments are clearly presented and well supported by the evidence, with only minor gaps or unaddressed issues.	Arguments are quite clear and consistent with the evidence provided, but key issues are inadequately addressed.	Arguments are somewhat clear and some evidence is offered.	No clear arguments are presented and the evidence is largely irrelevant or missing.
Appropriate perspective and tone	Is very convincingly written from the assigned perspective and highly appropriate for the intended audience.	Is convincingly written from the assigned perspective and largely appropriate for the intended audience.	Is generally written from the assigned perspective and often appropriate for the intended audience.	Some parts are written from the assigned perspective and may be somewhat appropriate for the intended audience.	Is not written from the assigned perspective and is not suited to the intended audience.

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Extension

- Invite students to work individually or as a class to pursue the suggested activities listed in *Extension*.

EXTENSION

A letter of reference for Verigin

Write a letter of reference supporting Peter Verigin's immigration to Canada, using criteria provided on the Immigration to Canada website of the Canadian Government.

Use the following sources as the basis for your recommendation:

<http://www.canadianmysteries.ca/sites/verigin/context/peterverigin/indexen.html>
<http://www.canadianmysteries.ca/sites/verigin/context/castofcharacters/indexen.html>

Canada's treatment of the Doukhobors

The Doukhobors left Russia because of persecution for their religious beliefs. Yet, when they came to Canada, they were also persecuted for their way of life. In both cases, they were treated harshly because of their deeply-held principles. Were they victimized in both countries simply because they were different, or are there reasons for distinguishing their treatment in Russia from their treatment in Canada? Examine the documents listed in *Evidence in the Case*. Also consult the following magazine article: Mrs. W. Garland Foster, "A Doomed Utopia", Saturday Night, June 14, 1924

Explore the Verigin murder

Apply your detective skills to MysteryQuest 11 and MysteryQuest 12. These mysteries are also associated with the murder of Peter Verigin and they invite you to reconstruct the crime scene and investigate possible suspects in the case.