



Was Jerome Mistreated?

This MysteryQuest investigates the prevailing standards of treatment for the mentally ill in the late 19th Century by assessing the care received by Jerome, a man who was deemed “not normal” by the local Acadians. Students learn to view past practices by sensitively adopting the perspectives of the time.

A critical thinking challenge to accompany

Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History
Jerome: The Mystery Man of Baie Sainte-Marie

<http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/27/indexen.html>

Author: Catriona Misfeldt
Series Editor: Roland Case

based on an approach developed by The Critical Thinking Consortium (TC²)
www.tc2.ca

Ages
16–18

Courses
Canadian history, social studies, civics

Key Topics

- historical perspective
- treatment of the mentally ill during the late 19th century

Critical Challenges

- Rate Jerome's treatment relative to typical treatment of mentally ill people.
- Considering the standards of the time, was Jerome mistreated?

Broad Understanding

- Students will learn that treatment of the mentally ill in the late 19th century was informed by different standards than those that are common today.
- Students will learn that historical perspective involves viewing the past through the social, intellectual, and moral lenses of the time.

Requisite Tools



Background knowledge

- knowledge of the treatment of the mentally ill in late 19th century Nova Scotia



Criteria for judgment

- criteria for a sound historical conclusion (e.g., plausible, supported with evidence, sensitive to the historical context)



Critical thinking vocabulary

- historical perspective
- inference



Thinking strategies

- data charts
- rating scale



Habits of mind

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/27/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 item of support material and set of procedures is linked to the relevant suggestions for whole class instruction.

Suggested Activities

Set the context

- Using [Introduction](#) as a guide, explain to students the context of the investigation. You may want to download and display [drawings and pictures](#) of Jerome, his home, and his community.
- Use the information found in the three documents referenced in [Step 1: Adopt a historical perspective](#) as speaking notes to provide an overview of Jerome's life and of 19th century Nova Scotia attitudes towards treatment of the mentally ill.
- Draw students' attention to the fact that our knowledge of mental illness and its treatment have changed dramatically since the late 19th century. Explain the idea of historical perspective and how it can help us make sense of historical practices deemed unusual or incomprehensible if considered by today's standards.

Discuss the challenge

- Divide students into groups of four. Use [The Task](#) as a guide to explain that each group will collectively analyze four documents dealing with typical care of the mentally ill and eight documents pertaining to Jerome's treatment. They will then judge by the standards of the time whether Jerome was mistreated.

Gather evidence about treatment of the mentally ill

- Using [Step 2: Gather evidence about care of the mentally ill](#) as a guide, explain that each group member will gather evidence from one of the documents about the care of the mentally ill. Distribute a copy of each of the four documents listed under Step 2 to each group.
- Distribute a copy of [Comparing Treatment](#) to each student. Discuss the five aspects of treatment that students will research. Direct each group member to record in the left-hand column any evidence from the assigned document about the typical treatment of people with mental illness.
- After completing their research, arrange for group members to share their findings and record each other's information on their own copies of [Comparing Treatment](#).
- As a class, discuss the following questions:
 - How well were people with mental illnesses treated in 19th century Nova Scotia?
 - What do these practices tell us about the values, beliefs, and priorities of the time?
 - What seem to be the main issues behind the treatment?

Look for evidence of Jerome’s treatment

- Using [Step 3: Find evidence of Jerome’s treatment](#) as a guide, explain to students that each group member is to find evidence from two documents showing how Jerome was treated. Distribute a copy of each of the eight documents listed under Step 3 to each group.
- Direct each student to record brief details from two assigned documents for each aspect of Jerome’s treatment in the right-hand column of the chart [Comparing Treatment](#).
- After completing their research, arrange for group members to share their findings and record each other’s information on their own copies of [Comparing Treatment](#).

Prepare for judgment of treatment

- Using [Step 4: Rate the comparative level of treatment](#) as a guide, explain that each group is to rate each aspect of Jerome’s treatment against the prevailing norms and practices.
- Distribute a copy of [Rating Jerome’s Treatment](#) to each student.

Reach an overall conclusion

- Using [Step 5: Offer your overall conclusion](#) as a guide, direct students individually to prepare a one-page response to the question: “Considering the standards of the time, was Jerome mistreated?”
- You may choose to hold a U-shaped discussion, asking students to sit at the spot along the “U” that represents their overall conclusion. Invite students to state their positions and explain why the position they are sitting in is the most defensible one for them. At several stages in the discussion, encourage students to physically move along the spectrum if they have heard reasons that cause them to reconsider their position.

Evaluation

- Use the rubric [Assessing the Evidence and Conclusion](#) to evaluate students’ gathering of evidence, comparative rating of the treatment, and overall conclusion about the adequacy of Jerome’s care.

Extension

- Invite students to work individually or as a class to pursue the additional activities suggested in [Extension](#).