HOW TO use CANADA READS in the CLASSROOM
Author’s foreword

I discovered CBC’s Canada Reads during my never-ending journey to find new and innovative ways to encourage my students to read literature. Canada Reads was featuring a book by one of the authors of the texts my students were studying in my class. So, I had my students gather around my laptop to watch one of the episodes. Initially, Canada Reads struck me as a show that would be more interesting to adults than teenagers, so I hoped that my students would simply gain an appreciation for the work of the author by watching as the book was discussed and debated on the show. However, my students became so engaged by the episode they were watching, that it wasn’t long before I heard them ask: “Ms. Can we watch this tomorrow?”

Watching Canada Reads was a wonderful learning opportunity for my students. Through the show, my students encountered discussion and debates by a panel of prominent Canadians on stories by Canadians, about Canadians, and about diverse experiences of living in Canada. They also got to see regular everyday Canadians be passionate about books.

As I watched Canada Reads with my students, I was inspired by the multitude of ways that I could incorporate this show as a tool in my classroom. This idea was further reinforced by watching my students engage in animated and excited conversations about literature.
What is Canada Reads?

CBC’s Canada Reads is an annual reality show focused on Canadian literature. Five Canadian books are selected and championed by five prominent Canadians. The show runs for four days, and at the end of each episode the panellists vote off a book until finally one book is chosen as the book that Canada should read. One can see similarities to the television show *Survivor*. In past years, notable Canada Reads winners have included *A Complicated Kindness* by Miriam Toews, *The Book of Negroes* by Lawrence Hill, and *Lullabies for Little Criminals* by Heather O’Neill. As well, the panellists represent every facet of Canadian society, and they include celebrated musicians, comedians, actors, politicians and athletes, such as Clara Hughes, Stephen Lewis, Humble The Poet and Justin Trudeau. The show is currently in its seventeenth year. The show can easily be accessed through all devices and mediums.

For more information please visit:  
[www.cbc.ca/canadareads](http://www.cbc.ca/canadareads)

Why should Canada Reads be incorporated into the classroom?

Canada Reads promotes Canadian content while making Canadian literature contemporary and cool. The show addresses various curriculum expectations in courses such as English, Canadian World Studies, Social Studies, Social Sciences, as well as Catholic Graduate Expectations and other learning outcomes that meet the demands of the world outside the classroom. These outcomes are referred to by different names in each province. For example, in Ontario, they are known as the 21st Century Global Competencies, in British Columbia — Core Competencies, and in Quebec — Cross Curricular Competencies. They address areas such as critical thinking, communication, problem solving and citizenship. Most importantly, Canada Reads models the importance of reading by allowing students to see noteworthy Canadians discuss and debate about books, be passionate about books, and raise issues that are important to Canadians.

ABOUT THE RESOURCE GUIDE

This resource guide has been designed to enable teachers to use Canada Reads as an education tool to promote literacy and student engagement. This resource is directed at grades 10-12, and while it would work best in an English course (i.e. a Short Story Unit, a Media Studies Unit, or an Independent Study Unit), it can be adapted to fit other subjects, and to accommodate diverse learning styles and needs. This resource can allow teachers to design their lessons to work in conjunction with the actual airing of the show, but it also allows the flexibility for teachers.

Required materials

➢ Excerpts from the shortlisted books that will appear on Canada Reads.
➢ Device/Tools to view Canada Reads (e.g. television, laptop, projector, Wi-Fi connection, speakers).

PLEASE NOTE:

Teachers should read and vet all excerpts before using them with students. Teachers should use professional judgment and their knowledge of their school boards’ policies when it comes to deciding on the appropriateness of texts to be used with their students. Teachers should also be prepared to offer alternative texts should any content impact a student negatively, while maintaining privacy of information.

CANADA READS 2020 – SHORTLISTED BOOKS

• Small Game Hunting at the Local Coward Gun Club by Megan Gail Coles
• From the Ashes by Jesse Thistle
• Son of a Trickster by Eden Robinson
• We Have Always Been Here by Samra Habib
• Radicalized by Cory Doctorow

For more information, see the Canada Reads book excerpts and backgrounders: www.curio.ca/canadareads

Suggested materials, tools & resources

➢ School board and personal devices (e.g. laptops and tablets)
➢ Ministry and school-sponsored computer programs and websites (e.g. Google Classroom/sites, Sketch Notes app, Padlet, YouTube).
➢ Access to social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Skype). The teacher can also create a class account in accordance with School Board policies.
➢ Chart paper, Markers, Journals, Writing, and Art materials.

PLEASE NOTE:

The materials suggested here are only suggestions. Teachers and students are not expected to incur any unnecessary costs in order to enjoy the Canada Reads experience.

Students’ use of devices (school board or personal) must be done in accordance with school board policies.
PREPARING FOR CANADA READS

Overview

In order to increase student understanding and engagement with the content and ideas that they will encounter during Canada Reads, it is highly recommended that teachers offer students opportunities for learning prior to the show’s airing. By the time the show airs, students should at the very least have already been introduced to the elements of a short story, and various literary devices, as these concepts in particular will be emphasized and reinforced throughout the program.

The following strategies can be used to address various aspects of Canada Reads:

- Large group discussion
- Small group discussion
- Journal writing
- Think/Pair/Share
- Jigsaw
- Other literacy strategies
- Cooperative learning
- Collaborative inquiry
- Critical thinking
- Project-based learning
- Literature circles
- Technology and social media

Introduction

Ask students to consider the following questions as they begin to engage with Canada Reads. There are a variety of strategies that teachers and students can employ to explore and answer these questions. The purpose of these Big Questions is to motivate students to connect to their prior knowledge and understanding.

Questions

1. Why do we read? (To generate ideas, check out the TedTalks video “More Reading: Kelly Corrigan at TEDxSonomaCounty”: https://goo.gl/Vb0vt9)
2. What are your favourite books?
3. What motivates you to read a book? (This CBC Books collection on Curio.ca might give you some ideas: www.curio.ca/firstpage)
4. What are the qualities that make a good book? Students can develop criteria.
5. What makes a story Canadian? Describe the qualities/characteristics of Canadian Literature.
6. Whose voices are included in stories? Whose voices are excluded from stories? Whose voices do we need to hear more of?
7. What are the qualities of a good argument?
8. How do we criticize?
9. What are the qualities of a good speaker? A debater?
The teacher’s role

The teacher has an important role in helping to develop and encourage students’ engagement and connection with Canada Reads. The teacher will:

➢ Explain Canada Reads to students.
➢ Divide the class into five groups. Each group will be responsible for supporting one of the five books shortlisted for Canada Reads. The teacher and the students can work together to determine which group will support which book.
➢ Assign the excerpts from the shortlisted Canada Reads books — found at www.curio.ca/canadareads. Each group is responsible for reading the excerpt of the book that they will be supporting. While there may not be time for students to read the whole texts, teachers can encourage students to read the books for pleasure, or to consider them for an Independent Study Project.
➢ Facilitate an exploration of the CBC websites Canada Reads (www.cbc.ca/canadareads), q (www.cbc.ca/radio/q), The Next Chapter (www.cbc.ca/radio/thenextchapter) and Curio.ca (www.curio.ca/canadareads) for videos and articles that explore the Canada Reads shortlisted books and authors.

➢ Encourage the use of social media as a communication tool. Monitor and filter the use of social media according to school board policies. Be mindful of age restrictions and the importance of communicating expectations for proper social media use. These should be discussed and constantly reinforced according to the values of digital citizenship.
➢ Review note-taking strategies as this skill will be emphasized.
➢ Organize the class schedule and obtain the appropriate resources so that students can view Canada Reads together. Students have multiple opportunities to view Canada Reads either with their class, or on their own time should the need emerge, as the show is available through a variety of mediums and times.
➢ Write to CBC Books and let them know how your class is engaging with Canada Reads — email cbcbooks@cbc.ca or fill out the form at http://goo.gl/CDKGyH.
Activities

Students will:

➢ Read and analyze excerpts of the shortlisted books.

➢ Answer the Questions for Critical Thinking found in each book backgrounder — found at www.curio.ca/canadareads.

➢ Take notes during the Canada Reads broadcast, and maintain a journal/notebook of their notes.

➢ Research the authors and the panellists that are involved with Canada Reads. Using sites such as CBC, Curio.ca and YouTube, students can look for video clips or recordings to get a sense of the author and the panellist. The teacher will monitor and filter the use of websites according to school board policies.

➢ Follow social media accounts for CBC Books, the authors and the panellists. A teacher can create a class account that is monitored by the teacher.

➢ Create a poster with a slogan, or an artifact that will represent and promote the book that is being supported. Create a hashtag (#). For example #TeamBook.
DURING CANADA READS

Overview

While Canada Reads is entertaining, the show provides constant opportunities to enhance student learning and reinforce literacy skills. This section will emphasize note-taking, creating and asking questions, and writing skills. During the show, students will take notes on each episode that they watch in order to collect supporting evidence for the book that they are representing, to help them determine whether or not they agree or disagree with what is going on in the show, to help them generate questions, and to help them be accountable for what they are watching. Additionally, there are a variety of ways, methods, and formats to take and organize notes. Teachers and students are encouraged to use the format that best suits the work that they are doing in their class.

Activities

Students will:

➢ Take notes on the following:
  a) The types of arguments being made.
  b) How panellists are making their arguments.
  c) Arguments they liked, arguments they didn’t like, arguments that confused them.
  d) Do the students agree with the book that is voted out?
  e) What kind of job did the panellists do?

➢ Write a summary or choose a method of their own to organize their notes.

➢ Make connections between what they are watching and the big questions (on page 6) that they are supposed to be considering. One way students might wish to do this is by converting their notes into a graphic organizer such as a Venn Diagram.

➢ Use social media methods to communicate and get involved with the show under the direct supervision of the teacher in accordance with school board policies.

➢ Prepare their own questions to ask the panellists on the show, at the discretion of the teacher and in accordance with
school board policies. Canada Reads has a Q & A period where the studio audience and the audience watching online can ask questions of the panellists at the end of the show. Viewers watching online can send in questions to the panellists, and some of the questions are selected and read publicly. The questions should be vetted by the teacher if possible. The teacher can assign a specific group to be responsible for asking questions for a specific episode. The teacher can also be the one to send the questions to Canada Reads on behalf of the students, or create the necessary opportunity for the students to share their questions with each other.

➢ Participate in creating a Canada Reads celebration for the last episode of the show under the guidance and supervision of the teacher.

➢ Participate in a debriefing session at the end of the show. Possible topics:

a) Did students agree or disagree with the results?

b) What did they think about the show overall?

c) How did the panellists do in representing their books?

d) Who did well? Who missed the mark?

e) Did any of the panellists persuade the students to change their position on their own book?

The teacher can decide how to organize the debriefing session. One suggestion that a teacher might consider is to create a talking circle. A talking circle is based in Indigenous practices, but for the purpose of classroom instruction it helps to create a safe space, whereby students can express themselves if they chose to. In a talking circle, students sit in a circle, and a regular object like a rock, pencil or eraser is passed around. The student who holds the object is the one who has the right to speak, and everyone else in the circle listens until it’s their turn.

AFTER CANADA READS: Activities for extending learning

Overview

Canada Reads can be incorporated into the classroom in concrete and substantial ways. This section offers suggestions for teachers to apply the learning from Canada Reads to a variety of learning and curriculum areas. This section further emphasizes the development of skills and competencies such as communication, critical thinking, citizenship and problem solving that students need to meet the demands of the world outside of the classroom. This section also allows teachers the flexibility to use Canada Reads beyond the show’s broadcast, and according to a schedule that works best for the class.

Create your own Canada Reads

Teachers are encouraged to create their own Canada Reads with their class using their own selection (i.e. Canadian or international literature).

In doing this, one suggestion that teachers might want to consider is using the student groups that have already been created for the purpose of working with the Canada Reads broadcast. Here is one way to approach this activity:

➢ Each group is assigned or selects a book — either the book that they were already representing for the most recent Canada Reads broadcast, or groups can switch books. They can also opt to choose a new book under the supervision of the teacher.

For those using this year’s Canada Reads books, don’t forget to check out the book backgrounders: [www.curio.ca/canadareads](http://www.curio.ca/canadareads)

➢ Each group works together to read, analyze the content, and create a list of arguments promoting their book as the one that their entire class should read.

➢ Having just viewed the different ways in which the panellists on Canada Reads advocated for their books, the students can employ those lessons as they present and debate their ideas amongst their peers.

➢ They can enhance their presentation with the use of media and digital technologies.

➢ Based on the quality of presentations and arguments given and defended, the class can decide which book is the one the entire class should read.
Need book suggestions?
The CBC Books website offers these reading lists on themes well-suited to the classroom:

• 100 young adult books that make you proud to be Canadian: www.cbc.ca/1.4197577
• 8 must-read Canadian books for children and young adults during Black History Month: www.cbc.ca/1.4531622
• 7 Canadian books to read on the International Day of the Girl: www.cbc.ca/1.4349216
• 11 Canadian young adult books to check out this fall
• 11 Canadian young adult books to check out this fall: https://www.cbc.ca/1.4792163
• 10 Canadian young adult title to watch for in the first half of 2018: www.cbc.ca/1.4515417

Plus you’ll find many others on CBC Books website: www.cbc.ca/books/readinglists

Debating skills
Teachers can use Canada Reads to focus on students developing debating skills, which consist of argument creation, listening and public speaking.

The following sites provide strategies and tips for using debates in high school:

• It’s Up For Debate: https://goo.gl/JpeQY5
• Teacher’s Guide to Introducing Debate: https://goo.gl/GsP3bM
• Great Debate: Developing Argumentation Skills: https://goo.gl/6xdWTZ
• Classroom Activities: How to Hold a Classroom Debate: https://goo.gl/BKYWPA

Canada Reads past panellists
Past Canada Reads broadcasts provide strong examples of effective debating techniques. Some memorable examples include the exchange between Wab Kinew and Stephen Lewis on the topic of torture in The Orenda, or between Elaine "Lainey" Lui and Craig Kielburger over the use of mature language in When Everything Feels Like the Movies.

Watch the Canada Reads past panellists video on Curio.ca: www.curio.ca/canadareads
The books that appeared on Canada Reads can be used to focus directly on developing reading skills and for reading/literacy programs. As part of an Independent Study Unit, students can choose to read one of the books that were featured on Canada Reads or from one of CBC Books’ Reading Lists at www.cbc.ca/books/readinglists.

Teachers and students can also use the books featured on Canada Reads to organize book clubs or literature circles.

**Academic writing**

Essays continue to be a common activity in English and most Humanities courses. The following are suggestions for essays topics. Remember essays can be written, visual and audio.

1. Use a topic that has been presented on Canada Reads. For example:
   - One Book to Open Your Eyes
   - One Book Canada Needs Now
   - One Book to Break Barriers
   - Starting Over
   - True Stories
   - One Novel to Change Our Nation

2. Write a persuasive essay arguing that your book is the book that everyone in Canada should be reading based upon the criteria that was created by the class to determine what makes a good book.

3. Write an argumentative essay on whether or not you agree with the outcome of Canada Reads.

4. Write an essay based on interesting characters and themes that resonated with you. Many of the books that are presented on Canada Reads address social justice topics. Both public and Catholic school boards address issues of social justice within a variety of subjects and curriculum areas.

5. Write a comparative essay using a book from Canada Reads and one that the student is reading either independently or through a class novel study.
Technology/digital

In addition to having students develop the traditional literacy skills of reading and writing, it is also important to provide students with the opportunities to develop their digital literacy and digital citizenship skills. Canada Reads offers opportunities to help students develop these skills.

➢ Students can create a blog or website to respond to a book that they are reading, using a platform that is age appropriate. The creation and publishing of the blog or website should be done in accordance with school board policies. There are plenty of free platforms that students can use. Here are two articles that will direct you to blogging platforms for students, as well as how to get started with incorporating blogging into your classroom.
  o The 5 Best Blogging Tools for Students in K-12 Schools: [https://goo.gl/QfPbDJ](https://goo.gl/QfPbDJ)
  o Blogging In The Classroom – How To Get Started: [https://goo.gl/UlJGSS](https://goo.gl/UlJGSS)

➢ Students can create their own book trailers, videos, stop motion pieces about the books they have chosen to read. Students would require access to either tools that are available to them in school, or their own devices.

➢ Students can access a variety of free online and Ministry of Education-sponsored tools to present their learning in innovative ways:
  o Mindomo will allow students to create online mind maps and brainstorms of the books that they are reading, which can later be transferred to the work of beginning essay writing.
  o Pixton will allow students to create online comic strips for the purpose of digital storytelling.

➢ Students can create a multimedia presentation about the book that they are reading. In addition to PowerPoint and Google Slides, there are numerous free online tools available for students to try:
  o Emaze
  o Powtoon
  o Prezi
  o Haiku Deck

➢ In doing these multimedia presentations, teachers should be mindful of any and all school board policies, especially in terms of privacy. Teachers can create the opportunity for students to receive feedback from peers, as well as create the opportunity for the students to take on the role of teacher as they present and showcase their presentation, and teach the book they have read to the class.
Creative responses & critical thinking

All the books featured in Canada Reads lend themselves to creative responses and expressions. Students can consider creating poetry, spoken word, music, visual art, dance or drama in response to something that they are reading in their books.

Here are two suggestions that teachers might want to consider:

1. Students can create Found Word Poetry based on the ideas in the Canada Reads books they are defending, or in response to their experience of watching Canada Reads.

2. Each of the books featured on Canada Reads represent significant social justice issues that our world continues to work at addressing. These issues include racism, oppression of Indigenous peoples in Canada, climate change, war, refugees and bullying. Students can write a story of their own that addresses a social justice issue either represented in the Canada Reads book they are defending or that came up during the debates in the broadcast.