The history of the Canadian people cannot be told without an in-depth examination of the role that farming life has played in the evolution of our nation. In this land of immigrants, many Canadians trace their roots to the land, a productive land that has fed not only Canadians but millions around the globe. Our language, our arts, our literature, and our political systems have all been influenced by a sense of place that is directly tied to working the land. As an industry, farming has placed Canada in the forefront of developed nations, and historically, farm products have been among our major exports. But the Canadian family farm has also been a social institution in and of itself, as anyone who has ever spent time at one of Canada's many agricultural exhibitions knows. This News in Review report examines how Canadian agribusiness and the family farm are not immune to global economic forces. (Start: 33:18; Length: 10:37)
Using both the print and non-print material from various issues of *News in Review*, teachers and students can create comprehensive, thematic modules that are excellent for research purposes, independent assignments, and small group study. We recommend the stories indicated below for the universal issues they represent and for the archival and historic material they contain.

"Canada's Recession," March 1991
"Farmers Revolt," November 1991
"Hard Times, Disappearing Jobs," February 1992
"Canada Now: A Diverse Landscape (Urban and Rural Ways of Life)," 1992
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The year 1998 was a very difficult time for farmers and their families in many parts of Canada. Along with the usual problems of pests and poor weather conditions, the global economic crisis delivered a body-blow to farm incomes. Producers of hogs and grain were especially hard-hit by the downturn in the Asian economies resulting from the financial meltdown that began there in 1997. With world export markets for these agricultural products plummeting, many farmers who had shifted their production into these sectors in the hopes of cashing in on the once-booming Asian market were facing bankruptcy. Pigs were being slaughtered and buried in order to avoid the cost of feeding them, and huge inventories of unsold wheat and other cereal crops were filling grain elevators across the Prairie provinces.

While farmers all across Canada were hurting, it was the West, Canada's traditional breadbasket, that was feeling the brunt of the farm crisis especially. Saskatchewan farmers were facing the most disastrous drop in their incomes since the days of the Great Depression of the 1930s. To some observers, the current situation appeared even more serious than the "dust bowl" of those grim years, and there were predictions that if present trends continued, farming as a way of life for many people in the Prairie provinces might disappear forever.

Across Canada, farmers took action to dramatize their cause and focus public attention on what they have long felt to be a problem that has been too readily ignored by politicians and the mass media. In Quebec, angry hog farmers blocked a major highway for four days during September 1998, refusing to lift
their roadblock until the provincial government seriously dealt with their problems. Meanwhile, in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, 700 protesting farmers organized a 225-truck convoy to dramatize their demands for financial aid from their province. Agricultural protest even became an international issue when American farmers, supported by their state and federal government officials, organized a blockade of Canadian wheat shipments across the border between Saskatchewan and North Dakota. U.S. farmers were angry that Canada was taking advantage of its low dollar and Canadian Wheat Board subsidies in order to dump cheap wheat onto the U.S. market.

Although the specific issues behind these protests differed, all of them helped to focus public and political attention on the serious economic problems many farmers currently face. Not all farmers in Canada are suffering however; some are even doing very well producing for the newly expanding "niche markets" for agricultural goods in high demand both domestically and globally. But it is clear that too many others are facing a real threat to their livelihoods and their lifestyles. Many agricultural analysts believe that urgent government action is required. Federal Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief recognized this when he announced a farm-aid financial bailout that would eventually amount to $900-million. He also urged his provincial counterparts, especially those in Saskatchewan and other hard-hit provinces, to top up the federal contribution by another $600-million from their own coffers to help save the farmers and the farming way of life in Canada.

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Comprehensive News in Review Study Modules

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NAFTA on Trial  
Revolution Down on the Farm  
Free Trade 10 Years Later  
The Lost Frontier
The majority of Canadians who live in urban areas are not very familiar with rural life and the challenges farmers and their families deal with on a daily basis. They may be even less aware of the serious problems currently plaguing the agricultural sector of Canada's economy. But behind the grim statistics and accounting tables lies a desperate reality for many of our country's farmers and their families. For most of our history, those who worked the land represented a significant percentage of the Canadian population, and their voices carried considerable political weight in national debates. However, over the past few decades, the overall proportion of farmers in Canadian society has declined dramatically. Now, only about four per cent of Canada's people live in rural areas and earn their livelihoods through farming. As a result, many farmers feel their problems do not receive the degree of national attention they deserve, especially from Canadians who live in urban areas of the country.

A Visit To the Farm

Watch this News in Review report and while doing so, jot down your impressions of farming and rural life in Canada today as they are depicted in the video. When you have finished watching the video, form small groups to discuss the following issues and questions arising from your viewing:

1. What difficulties do Canadian farmers currently face?

2. In what ways are these problems similar to and different from those of Canadians living in towns and cities?
3. If your school is located in an urban area, discuss what you learned about life in rural Canada from watching the video.

4. If your school is located in a rural area, discuss how the portrayal of the problems facing farmers in Canada at present compares with the situation in your region or province.

5. If your school is in a predominantly farming area, how accurate do you think this visual depiction is of your way of life?

Farming Facts
Watch the video a second time. This time be prepared to explain the importance, significance, and relevance to this News in Review story of the following: The Great Depression of the 1930s; pests, bad weather, and drought; the Asian economic crisis, which refers to the devaluation of the currencies of major Asian countries, and a resulting economic recession there; grain and hogs; the action taken by Quebec farmers in order to dramatize their cause, the reasons for their actions, and their demand; the rate of decline of farm incomes in Canada; the major stumbling block faced by the Canadian government in trying to design a relief program for Canadian farmers; the action taken by U.S. farmers to dramatize their discontent with Canadian agricultural policies; the Canadian federal Minister of Agriculture and his relief program for Canadian farmers (give details); Alberta, Ontario, and Saskatchewan and the response of each to the plan, and the reasons for the latter province's decision.
There is a broad consensus among farmers, political leaders, economists, and others that many Canadian farmers are facing serious problems resulting from low prices for their products. However, the experts differ over both the root causes of the current difficulties, and the steps that should be taken to alleviate them. Here is a sampling of comments from farmers, business and agricultural columnists, political leaders, and others that reflects the wide range of often conflicting views on the crisis "down on the farm."

For each of the statements below, be prepared to explain in your own words the person's point of view. Consider how each statement communicates a different aspect of this news story.

"If you can't handle stress, you never want to get anywhere close to a farm. There's so many variables out there that you have no control over whatsoever. When in my farming career would it occur to me that I gave a damn about what the Japanese yen was doing today? Who told me when I started farming that it would have a huge impact on my livelihood when the Japanese yen went up and down?" Jim Johnson, Ontario farmer

"The continuing use of subsidies is expanding production beyond what market fundamentals would normally dictate. If European farmers were looking at the same price levels as Canadians last year, they would not have produced a record wheat crop." Derek Sliworsky, Canadian Wheat Board

"The choice is clear. Either we allow small farmers to be swallowed up by the big guys, thereby depopulating the
countryside, and declaring the Prairies for the established farmer only, or we bite the bullet and accept that agricultural subsidies will be with us always. It's an important decision with enormous ramifications, and it should certainly not be made by Eastern city-dwellers who wouldn't know lentils from flax."

Maggie Siggins, Saskatchewan writer

"We would possibly hold out here until the lights went out. But I just hate to see the injustice of it all. Basically, what you're talking about is economic annihilation for the farming family. And the government couldn't care less, you see?"

Morris Precesky, Saskatchewan wheat farmer

"I know full well the difficulties that producers are in and that is why we are taking this seriously. We are working to put a plan in place that will assist those who are the hardest hit as quickly as we can."

Lyle Vanclief, federal Minister of Agriculture

"Despite the hurt that's being felt by Western Canadian farmers as commodity prices fall, venture capitalists can sense a strong return on investments as the entire agricultural industry is revolutionized, and demand for goods expands at explosive rates . . . Agriculture is a proud part of Canada's history. And there's no reason why it can't be an important part of our future."

David Crane, business columnist, The Toronto Star

"The farmers that are going to survive and be here in five or 10 years are the ones that understand world markets and form alliances with the people they need to."

Herb Watson, Manitoba hog farmer.

"The mantra in Ontario last year was go big or go niche."

Jeff Atkinson, Canadian Federation of Agriculture

"Farming itself is not in danger of dying—certain kinds of farming are not doing well right now, while others are prospering. Subsidizing certain sectors of the industry (and farming is an industry) only serves to distort the market signals that tell farmers which crops to focus on and which to avoid, and raises the question of why other industries aren't entitled to the same kinds of subsidies."

Mathew Ingram, columnist, Business West

"While many farmers face difficult circumstances today, talk of a crisis is overblown, and the case for general government aid is poor, especially where other Canadian businesses in analogous situations would get no help. The Canadian government's
responsibility is to do everything in its power to ensure that public policy . . . is not an obstacle to Canadian farmers managing their business to the best of their ability, while accepting both the rewards and the disadvantages of their choices."  an editorial in The Globe and Mail, December 16, 1998

"We're just trying to do as much land as we can, with as little equipment as we can. It hasn't been rosy all along, but we've been progressive and we've diversified. These are not self-inflicted wounds. I don't think anybody wants subsidies, but at this point it's a matter of survival. There are a lot of people, good operators, who are not going to get out of this if they don't get some help, and it's through no fault of their own."  Rick Vaags, Manitoba hog farmer

"The proportional share per capita [of the proposed federal-provincial farm relief program] on a 60-40 split across this country is way out of range with anybody else in this country. This simply isn't fair. This is our cod stock loss. This is our ice storm. I'm going to continue to be stubborn on this because I am a believer in equity across this country."  Eric Upshall, Saskatchewan Minister of Agriculture

"I'm a true optimist. I'm not a person to whine and complain, but this is outright rudeness."  Roger Begrand, Saskatchewan farmer

"To be quite honest, I don't know what you are going to be able to grow next year to make a profit."  David Rolfe, Manitoba grain farmer

"If [the farm relief program] isn't handled right, then the wrong people will get money and the right people won't. And that would be a tragedy."  Gerry Friesen, Manitoba hog farmer

"We can't fix the problem just by throwing money at it. We have to fix the basic problem."  Doug Thompson, Saskatchewan wheat farmer

"It's possible to prevent a mass exodus from farming, if the federal minister moves quickly. But it's easy to see a lot of people will go broke, unless they get some money soon."  Jack Wilkinson, Canadian Federation of Agriculture

Activities
1. Read the comments above and summarize each of them in your own words. Decide whether or not the comments are an optimistic, realistic, or pessimistic view of the current situation facing Canada's farmers.

2. Group the comments into broad categories. What is the general message that the farmers are trying to convey to Canadian politicians and the public at large? What differences do you observe among the comments of business and agricultural writers regarding (a) the causes of the current problems, and (b) possible solutions to them?

3. Those who have studied the current crisis on the Canadian farm argue that short-term financial aid, however necessary, will not address the underlying causes of the economic malaise in the agricultural sector. But while most agree that present problems have deep roots, they differ strongly over just what kind of action should be taken. Some advocates of a more "free-market" approach to agriculture believe that it is government controls and subsidies that are to blame, restricting market forces from working their magic on the agricultural industry. They believe that unprofitable sectors should not be kept afloat by public money, and that farmers should be encouraged to diversify into new niche markets on the global arena. Others take the view that farming is more than just an economic activity, but an integral part of Canada's culture and society that has shaped our national identity over the course of many decades. They are convinced that the family farm is an institution worth preserving for reasons beyond mere economic accounting, and that the Canadian government should follow the example of the European Union nations, who extend generous export subsidies to their farmers that shelter them from the whims of the global market. How does the above information summarize the dilemma of this story?
Farming and Rural Life in Canada
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Some Proposed Solutions

As the federal and provincial governments contemplate how to help farmers suffering economic hardship, a number of short and long-term solutions to the crisis in agriculture were being proposed. Below you will find some of them. The class will be divided into small groups and each group will be assigned a different proposed solution to evaluate. Each group should appoint a spokesperson to report the group's findings and to suggest to what extent the group finds the proposed solution viable and practical.

1. Establishing a disaster-relief program
   The Canadian Federation of Agriculture has proposed a plan that would aid individual farmers whose incomes had fallen below an average calculated on the basis of the past few years. This would not constitute a direct export subsidy to farmers, so that it would be compatible with international trade rules covered by either the North American Free Trade Agreement or the World Trade Organization. This would be necessary in order to avoid any potential retaliation from the United States or the European Union. A plan modelled after this idea was proposed by federal Minister of Agriculture Lyle Vanclief in December 1998.

2. Creating a level playing field
   Some farmers claim that the amount of federal subsidies paid to them, especially in the grain-growing sector, is far less than that received by their U.S. or European competition. The United States pumps billions of dollars into its agricultural sector to help farmers deal with low prices. And farmers in European Union states have increased their production despite low prices, because they are protected by generous export subsidies from
the vagaries of the market. Every tonne of U.S. wheat grown receives a $72 (Canadian) subsidy, and a European tonne $116. The comparable figure for Canada is $15. Since the Canadian government does not have the funds to match these generous subsidies, farmers are urging federal trade negotiators to push for a more equitable subsidization schedule to be agreed upon by all major agricultural-products exporting countries.

3. Letting market forces prevail
Those who oppose federal subsidization programs, marketing boards, and other types of government regulation or involvement in the agricultural sector of the economy believe that they do more harm than good. They argue that if these impediments to the free functioning of the market for agricultural products were removed, farmers would be encouraged to diversify into areas that are more profitable, either domestically or globally. This would result in some short-term dislocation and hardship, they admit, but the long-term results would be beneficial for farmers and the Canadian economy in general.

4. Revising the Net Income Stabilization Account (NISA)
Farmers' contributions to this income-pooling plan are matched by federal and provincial contributions, except in Alberta. Farmers are able to draw on these accounts if their profits drop drastically. But many farmers' organizations claim that the average farmer's NISA account is too small to handle the current losses. One Saskatchewan farmer, for example, has approximately $120 in his NISA account.

5. Extending food aid to Russia
Farm lobbyists are pressuring the federal government to join the United States and the European Union in buying grain and hogs from domestic producers and sending these food products as humanitarian relief to help hungry people in regions of Russia where food is scarce. This would create a new market for unsold stocks of these products, and help reduce the inventory at home, which would also serve to stimulate prices.

6. Loosening banking rules
Many farmers are facing bankruptcy unless their creditors are willing to renegotiate their existing debt or extend further loans to cover current and projected future losses of income. The Farm Credit Corporation, with reserves of $5-billion, has cooperated to some extent, but most Canadian banks have been reluctant to extend greater assistance. Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief is asking the banks to be more forthcoming.
Follow-up Activity
Following the group presentations, discuss as a class the pros and cons of each proposed solution and then attempt to reach a consensus on which solution or solutions would be the most appropriate.

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As you read the following material, think about why farming in
Canada is history and news.

To many Canadians, farming is more than just another way to
make a living. Agriculture and the rural values it embodies are a
way of life, one that has deep roots in the collective psyches of
people who may have never even visited a Canadian farm. To
Prairie grain farmers like Don Kinzie, whose family has worked
the same Saskatchewan soil for over half a century, the rural
way of life means more than just the bottom line of his bank
account. The future of whole regions of the Prairies, dotted with
small towns and villages, is at stake as a result of the current
crisis on the land. But the question people like Don Kinzie and
countless other Canadians are now debating is simply this:
Should the government use tax dollars to preserve a rural way
of life that has been such an integral part of our history and
culture? Or should we bow to what seems to be the inevitable
trends of national and global economic forces and let these rural
communities disappear, along with their main streets, grain
elevators, and heritage farmhouses?

The Early Years of Canadian Farming
Canada's first farmers were aboriginal people, who began to
cultivate crops of corn, beans, and squash approximately 2000
years ago. The first European colonists to settle in what is now
Canada learned from the Natives how to grow and harvest
these crops, which were practically unknown in the Old World.
During their first harsh winters in the new land, many settlers
counted on the Native people for the food that kept them from
starvation.
The 17th-century French colonists who began to settle in Acadia (now Nova Scotia) and later along the banks of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec faced great difficulties in making the untamed land suitable for cultivation and the raising of livestock. Trees had to be cleared, marshes had to be drained, and the soil had to be prepared, all with hand tools and much backbreaking labour. It was not until the 1660s that New France had succeeded in producing a small surplus of agricultural goods. For most of this time, farmers practised subsistence agriculture, barely growing enough to meet their own basic needs.

After the British conquest of New France and the American Revolution, waves of new English-speaking settlers began to arrive in the Maritimes and what is now Southern Ontario. The rich soils of the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes basin soon produced bountiful crops of wheat that were exported to rapidly industrializing Great Britain by the time of the War of 1812. Shortly after, the first farms spread west into the prairies as Scottish settlers established a colony along the banks of the Red River in present-day Manitoba. But during this time, agricultural techniques had barely advanced since the days of the first French colonists. It was only in 1824, for instance, that the land was tilled using oxen with walking ploughs made of wood and harrows made with timbers with spikes driven through as teeth. Farmers were constantly plagued with their traditional enemies—bad weather, drought, grasshoppers, floods, and mice.

Alarmed at the growth of western settlement and fearful about what this might do to the lucrative fur trade in the region, the Hudson's Bay Company tried to discourage potential farmers from moving west. Its officials stated that the land west of the Red River was of too poor quality to be brought under the plough. In order to substantiate this claim, a British expedition under Captain John Palliser visited the southern prairie regions now located in Saskatchewan and Alberta. He agreed that the land in that area, nicknamed "Palliser's Triangle," was indeed too arid for farming. But another survey, conducted by University of Toronto agriculture professor Henry Hind, found that the south prairie shortgrass land could be cultivated if a massive irrigation project was undertaken. He recommended the construction of a dam near the elbow of the South Saskatchewan River.

Until the 1870s, however, the prairie lands remained the home of the nomadic Native and Métis people, and very few farmers arrived from the east. During this period, many significant advances in farming technology took place. The cast-iron
The "Wheat Boom" and Western Settlement

Following Confederation in 1867, the new Canadian government was eager to promote the settlement of the vast western lands in order to prevent their being annexed by the United States. In 1872, the Dominion Lands Act was passed, granting homestead rights to settlers and providing for a survey of the lands stretching west of the Great Lakes. Individuals and land companies were also encouraged with gifts of land and financial rewards to establish new settlements on the Prairies. By 1885, the Canadian Pacific Railway had been finished coast to coast, and an east-west link now existed to bring settlers in and ship grain and other agricultural products west to the port of Vancouver or east to Port Arthur and Fort William on the shores of Lake Superior.

At the same time, federal agents under the supervision of Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior in the government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier (1896-1911), were actively promoting immigration to Canada. Their target markets for prospective settlers were the United States, Great Britain, and Eastern Europe. American farmers could bring with them their valuable experience and know-how, while peasants from the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires would jump at the opportunity to own and work on their own land. Sifton's policy was a success, and the period from the 1890s to the onset of the First World War in 1914 witnessed a massive influx of Western settlement and the springing up of new urban centres such as Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary, and Edmonton.

The Western farmers used horses, oxen, and sometimes steam engines to break the hard prairie sod and begin planting grain crops, chiefly a new strain of wheat that was hardy enough to mature in the region's short growing season. Between 1900 and 1920, wheat production in the Prairie provinces expanded enormously as more land was brought under cultivation and technological innovations like steam-powered ploughs and threshing machines made farms more productive and less labour-intensive. The years of the First World War (1914-18) brought a boom to farming in Canada, as the West became the breadbasket for Britain. Wheat continued to be one of Canada's principal exports in the immediate postwar period, and the
greatest single crop yet grown was brought to harvest in 1928.

**From the "Dust Bowl" To the Present**

The onset of the Great Depression of the 1930s, however, spelled the end of the long agricultural boom. The economic crisis brought with it crashing prices for agricultural products and other natural resources, Canada's main trade goods. Also, a disastrous drought gripped the Prairies during the years 1929-37. The affected area, known as the "Dust Bowl," included most of Southern Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, and farmers watched in despair as the pitiless winds ripped their precious topsoil away and cast it into the skies above. In addition, plagues of grasshoppers, caterpillars, and mice ate whatever crops had survived the drought. As a result of this, many Prairie farmers simply packed up and abandoned the homesteads their families had worked since the boom began. Derelict farmhouses and barns that were left behind during this period may still be seen today, dotting the fields on both sides of the Trans-Canada Highway.

The Second World War (1939-45) again stimulated agricultural production, but the enlistment of many young men from rural areas into the armed services also created a serious farm-labour shortage. When the war ended, many of these soldiers were reluctant to return to the farms, preferring instead to find new jobs in the cities. Those who continued to work the land had to consolidate their holdings into larger units, which they farmed with increasingly sophisticated machinery. As a result of these economic and social trends, the percentage of Canadians who were involved in farming fell from 33 per cent in 1931 to only 4 per cent by the 1980s.

**Farming in Canada Today**

Despite the relatively small number of people currently engaged in farming in Canada compared with the total population of the country, agriculture is still a very important sector of the Canadian economy. Farm products are among the most valuable commodities that this country exports abroad. And while the "family farm" continues to be the mainstay of Canada's agricultural system, large agribusiness concerns have also risen to prominence in recent decades.

New technologies have continued to revolutionize Canadian farming methods. Among these are more effective pesticides and herbicides, chemical fertilizers, genetic breakthroughs in plant and animal production, developments in seed research, and improved harvesting techniques. Huge tracts of land in the northern Prairies that were once considered too remote and arid
for farming have been brought under cultivation. Computer technology is now harnessed for the automatic irrigation of these prairie lands.

Canadians were at the forefront in the development of new farming tools and methods that transformed agriculture beginning in the late 19th century. Two Ontario manufacturers of cast-iron and wrought-iron farm implements, Massey and Harris, merged to form a major farm machinery company, Massey-Harris, in 1891. But the main source of power on the farm remained the horse, until it was finally phased out by the new gasoline-powered tractor after the Second World War.

Agrarian Myths and Realities In Canada
As this brief history of farming in Canada indicates, agriculture and the rural way of life have shaped our nation's destiny and collective identity from the earliest period of settlement. While only a tiny fraction of today's population is employed in farming, many Canadians trace their family roots to rural communities, either in this country or abroad. To many people, farming and the simple, "down-to-earth" way of life it represents, seems to be healthier, as well as more honest and desirable than the crowded, complicated, and hectic lifestyle of city-dwellers. In recent years, there has even been a significant back-to-the-land movement among middle-class urban Canadians who have relocated in small communities and rural areas in search of this imagined good life.

Television advertisements for agricultural products like eggs and fruit frequently tap into this agrarian myth, portraying the farm families who produce these goods as enjoying a wholesome, close-knit, and tranquil existence. The reality for many Canadian farmers and their families, however, is quite different, especially since the onset of the current agricultural crisis. Nonetheless, many farmers today wish to preserve their way of life in spite of the serious hardships they have had to face. While some have made compromises with the new economic realities by finding additional sources of employment off the farm, many want to continue with the way of life their families have followed for generations.

The present crisis down on the farm places the issues raised by farmers like Don Kinzie in sharp relief. Many Canadians pay lip service to the virtues of the rural way of life and the desirability of preserving the family farm as a mainstay of our society. But it remains to be seen if the majority of these predominantly urban-based taxpayers are willing to pay the admittedly substantial costs involved. This question is made especially problematic in
view of the current reigning free-market orthodoxies that are critical of any public financial support for private business operations. Is farming just another industry, that should be left to sink or swim on the shoals of global market forces, or does it signify something more to our history and culture, whose value to our nation cannot be measured by dollar signs? This is the question that hovers over the future of Canada's farms at the end of the century.

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1. As a class project, make a list of the food products you consume in your home. Find out which of them are produced in Canada and which are imported from other countries. Monitor the prices of some of these products over a few months, noting any changes in price that occur during this period.

2. Find out more about the history of farming in Canada, focusing on life on pioneer farms, early farm implements and techniques, the importance of wheat and other crops, the settlement of the Prairie provinces, and the experience of farm families (men, women, and children) at different periods of Canadian history such as the Great Depression and the two World Wars.

3. Rural themes and settings have been prominent in a number of major Canadian works of fiction. Read and prepare a book report on one of the following novels that portray farming life in Canada during different times in our country's history: *Thirty Acres*, by A. Ringueut; *Roughing it in the Bush*, by Susanna Moodie; *Who Has Seen the Wind*, by W.O. Mitchell; *Anne of Green Gables*, by L.M. Montgomery; *As for Me and My House*, by Sinclair Ross; *The Mountain and the Valley*, by Ernest Buckler; *Maria Chapdelaine*, by Louis Hémon; *Glengarry School Days*, by Ralph Connor; *Settlers of the Marsh*, by Frederick Philip Grove; or *Lives of Girls and Women*, by Alice Munro. This is just a small sampling of the many novels and other works of fiction that capture aspects of rural life in Canada, past and present.
4. Find out more about the issues involved in the current economic problems Canadian farmers are facing. What domestic and global factors have contributed to the present situation? What possible solutions have been advocated for reviving the agricultural sector of the Canadian economy?

5. Research the economic importance of agriculture in Canada's international trade, and how farmers might be able to take advantage of emerging global market trends to diversify their production and enhance their profitability.

6. If your school is located in or near a rural area of the country, interview a local farmer or representative of a farm organization in order to obtain his or her views of the current problems Canadian farmers are facing, and how they are having an impact on your community or on your region of the country.

7. Research the role that farmers' movements have played in Canada's political history. Parties such as the United Farmers of Alberta or Ontario, or the Farmer-Labour Party of Nova Scotia at one time formed provincial governments. National political groups like the Progressive Party, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (forerunner of the New Democratic Party), and even today's Reform Party have had strong roots in Canada's rural areas. To what extent have these organizations helped to shape the political agenda in Canada? How politically influential are farmers today, compared with previous periods in our country's history?

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