



Grades 4 to 6 | Social Studies

Activity Plan: Celebrations Shaping Identity

**SOUTH ASIAN CANADIAN
LEGACY PROJECT**



**SOUTH ASIAN
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OF THE FRASER VALLEY**

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Visit the Saffron Threads website for more educational resources:
www.saffronthreads.ca

Overview

Big question

How are different elements of South Asian cultures represented within Canadian culture?

Activity description

Students will do research and explore how South Asians and immigration of South Asians to Canada has shaped and influenced B.C. and Canada today. They will choose one culture to investigate and research to learn more about how that culture's immigration to Canada played a part in or influenced Canada's identity, and present their learnings to their peers.

Grades and curricular area(s)

- Grades 4 to 6
- Social Studies

Big ideas

Social Studies	
Grade 4	Demographic changes in North America created shifts in economic and political power.
Grade 5	Immigration and multiculturalism continue to shape Canadian society and identity.
Grade 6	Complex global problems require international co-operation to make difficult choices for the future.

Curricular competencies

Social Studies	
Grade 4	Construct arguments defending the significance of individuals/groups, places, events, or developments
Grade 5	Construct arguments defending the significance of individuals/groups, places, events, or developments

Grade 6	Construct arguments defending the significance of individuals/groups, places, events, or developments
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Materials/Resources

- [South Asian Canadians backgrounder](#)
- [Early Immigration of South Asian Canadians backgrounder](#)
- [#ThreadingOurStories](#)
- [South Asian Canadian Heritage](#)
- [South Asian Canadian Digital Archive](#)
- [Canadian Sikh Heritage](#)
- [British Columbia: An Untold History](#)
- [Celebrations Around the World](#) (handout)

Kick Off and Connect

Step 1

Think-Pair-Share discussion: Provide students with two questions to think about, discuss with a partner, and then share with the class:

- What is culture?
- What are some examples of culture?

After everyone shares with the class, share one (or multiple) [dictionary definitions](#) of culture.

Step 2

In small groups, have students complete the [Celebrations Around the World](#) handout. Depending on timing, you may choose to have each group research a few celebrations or traditions, or all groups may research them all.

Step 3

Review the handout answers.

Ask students (as a class or in small groups):

- What is the difference between a faith-based (religious) celebration and a cultural celebration? (Note: Faith-based celebrations may look different for different cultures or parts of the world.)
- Can celebrations be both faith-based and cultural?
- What celebrations had you not heard of?
- What is your favourite celebration or tradition?

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- Have you ever participated in a South Asian celebration? If yes, what did you enjoy about it? If no, which celebration would you like to learn more about or participate in?

If your class isn't familiar with South Asia, refer to the [South Asian Canadians backgrounder](#).

Step 4

In small groups, have students brainstorm answers to the following questions:

- What does it mean to be Canadian?
- What are some characteristics of Canadians?

After students have reflected in groups, generate a word cloud or create a brainstorm web on the board.

Optional: Watch [Up Here, in Canada](#), a song about Canadian stereotypes.

Explore and Engage

Step 1

Have students research and explore a South Asian cultural custom or celebration and consider how it could have helped shape and influence B.C. and Canada. Students can do this in pairs or individually. Once they've selected a custom or celebration, ask them to brainstorm a list of questions they want to answer during their research.

You may choose to share this list of questions to support their brainstorming:

- What is the reason for or origin of the practice or celebration?
- What clothing or accessories are worn during these celebrations?
- What food is eaten?
- When does the celebration take place? How long does it last?
- How is the custom or practice celebrated or practised in B.C.?

Step 2

Have students complete the research and report back in a format of their choosing—for example, a verbal presentation or a written summary.

Step 3

Once groups have learned about their chosen custom or celebration, have students continue their research and discussions on the following questions.

Grade 4

- What First Nations customs or celebrations have similarities with the custom or celebration you researched?

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- How has this custom or celebration existed and transformed within your community?

Grade 5

- How has immigration to Canada shaped the role this custom or celebration has?
- How did discriminatory practices toward South Asians impact the custom or celebration throughout history?

Grade 6

- How would these celebrations look different in B.C. or Canada if not for migration?
- How do the celebrations differ in the way they are celebrated between South Asia and B.C. or Canada?
- How did the treatment of minority populations (both past and present) influence the ability to celebrate cultural festivals?

Step 4

Have students research a culture of choice (their own, an Indigenous culture, or any other culture) to learn more about where their family came to Canada from, or about people from the culture they chose and their immigration to Canada. Next, have them take everything they have learned from Part 1 of this lesson to decide how that culture and heritage may have influenced or played a part in Canadian identity today. Key categories to research can include:

- Foods
- Clothing
- Traditions
- Medicine
- Celebrations

Wrap-up and Assess

Assessment

Have students share their learning in a format of their choice: poster, Google Slides, PowerPoint, or written reflection. Encourage students to use the voice and stories of their family members, friends, and other people with first-hand experiences in immigrating to Canada.

Extend and Transform

- To make this activity more accessible for diverse learners and ELL students, have students complete the activities in pairs or groups of three.
- Consider introducing this activity as an introductory lesson to past discriminatory policies and practices in Canada. Students can learn more about these in *South Asian Canadians: People over Policy*.

Name: _____

Celebrations Around the World

For each of the celebrations or traditions listed, identify the country, religion, and/or culture in which it originated.

- 1) Christmas _____
 - 2) Día de los Muertos _____
 - 3) Diwali _____
 - 4) Durga Puja _____
 - 5) Eid al-Fitr _____
 - 6) Haa Summer Festival _____
 - 7) Hanukkah _____
 - 8) Holi _____
 - 9) Kandy Esala Perahera _____
 - 10) Lent _____
 - 11) Lohri _____
 - 12) Lunar New Year _____
 - 13) Nowruz _____
 - 14) Pongal _____
 - 15) Ramadan _____
 - 16) Paro Tshechu _____
 - 17) Vaisakhi _____
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Celebrations Around the World – Answer Key

1) Christmas	Christian holiday, originated in Rome
2) Día de los Muertos	Mexico
3) Diwali	Hindu festival (and other Indian religions)
4) Durga Puja	India/West Bengal; Hindu tradition
5) Eid al-Fitr	Islamic tradition
6) Haa Summer Festival	Bhutan
7) Hanukkah	Jewish celebration
8) Holi	India, Hindu festival
9) Kandy Esala Perahera	Sri Lanka; Buddhist celebration
10) Lent	Christian religious observance
11) Lohri	Northern India
12) Lunar New Year	Regions following the lunar calendar
13) Nowruz	Iran (Persian)
14) Pongal	Tamil; Hindu festival
15) Ramadan	Islamic tradition
16) Paro Tshechu	Bhutan; Buddhist festival
17) Vaisakhi	Sikh festival