



Canadian Legends: An Introduction to Canadian Theatre

Lesson Overview

ADA10/ADA20: In this lesson, students will learn about the world of professional Canadian theatre. In particular they will learn about the life, career and thoughts of a legendary Canadian theatre artist, by watching videos from [Canada's Theatre Museum Legend Library Collection](#). This could be used as a standalone lesson, or could also be used as part of a larger [unit on Canadian theatre](#).

Learning Goals

By the end of this lesson, students will...

- Identify a person who is a legend of Canadian theatre
- Identify places, people, organizations and/or projects that have been part of their Canadian theatre legend's career
- Analyze and reflect on the artist's statements about their career in Canadian theatre
- Generate questions to extend the conversation

Guiding Questions

- What makes someone a legend?
- What legendary theatre art or artists do we already know about?
- What is the Legends Library?
- What can we learn about theatre in Canada from exploring the Legends Library?

Readiness

- Students will be familiar with responsible digital citizenship and appropriate use of online resources.

Terminology

- Anchor chart

Materials

- Internet-enabled devices for students
- [Canada's Theatre Museum Legends Library](#) (weblink)
- [Legends Library: Martha Henry on knowing our theatre history](#).
- Whiteboard/blackboard, and markers/chalk
- Map of Canada. A simple, free option is available through the Government of Canada, Dept of Natural Resources [here](#).
- **PDF #1 Canadian Theatre Legend Interview**
- (Optional) Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) [Theatre Map](#)

Minds On

Whole Class > What Makes a Legend?

Write a quote on the board: "I am not going to be a star. I am going to be a legend." - Freddie Mercury.

Ask students their initial responses to this quote. Pose a question to the class: *What does it mean to be legendary? Who do they think of when they think of someone who is 'a legend.'?*

Pairs > Brainstorm Legendary Theatre Artists, Theatre Companies, and Plays

Pose a question to the class: *Who are some legendary theatre artists, theatre companies, and/or famous plays that they know of?*

Ask students to brainstorm, with a partner, and write down any theatre artists they know (often these might be actors), or any plays they have heard of.

Pairs > Brainstorm *Canadian* Theatre Artists and Plays

Once students have their lists, ask them to circle any artists or plays that are Canadian. (If they're not sure if someone's Canadian, they could do a web search to find out.)

Then, ask students to brainstorm if they can list any other Canadian theatre artists, companies, or theatre works.

Whole Class > Anchor Chart, Inquiry Questions

Ask students to share the ideas they came up with of Canadian theatre artists, plays and companies. Create an anchor chart with these ideas.

As a class, reflect on how much they knew about Canadian theatre, and how it compared with their knowledge of theatre from elsewhere.

Key Questions for Discussion

- *How many Canadian artists/companies/plays were we able to name?*
- *How does this compare with artists and plays from other countries?*
- *Why do you think this is?*
- *Were we able to come up with any local artists or companies?*

Extensions

Ask students if they know of any locally-based artists or companies. Discuss the responses. Use the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) [Theatre Map](#) to explore which/if any are nearby.

Differentiation

All activities could be done in a variety of groupings - including as a whole class, with small groups, or individually as a journaling activity.

Students could write responses, or share them orally to be compiled by the teacher on the whiteboard, or using a digital brainstorming tool.

Assessment for learning

Assessment through observation through whole class discussion

Action!

Whole Class > Introduce the Legends Library

Introduce the Legends Library to the class. Explain that it is a repository of video interviews with Canadian theatre legends. The Theatre Museum describes it as “Icons of the Canadian stage, in their own words.”

Show the class the clip from the [Legends Library: Martha Henry - On knowing our theatre history](#). (1:24 in total).

Key Questions for Discussion

- *Have you heard of any of the Canadian theatre artists that Martha Henry names?*
- *Have you heard of Martha Henry, or R.H. Thompson? (the people in the video clip)*
- *What does Martha Henry mean when she says ‘you are standing on their shoulders’?*

Individual > Explore the Legends Library

Provide students with the **worksheet (PDF #1)**, and the link to Canada’s Theatre Museum Legends Library. Assign or have them select artists of choice and have them watch one or several videos, completing the worksheet as they watch.

Whole Group > Share and Compile

Ask students to share the list of people, places, organizations and projects that were mentioned in their interviews. Add to the anchor chart from the Minds On section earlier. This is probably a great glimpse into the world of Canadian theatre!

Whole Group > Map It Out

Compile all of the places described by artists in the interviews by plotting them on a map of Canada. Invite students to notice patterns, or notice things that are missing.

Key Questions for Discussion

- *What are we seeing here about where theatre is happening in Canada?*
- *Are there any areas that seem overrepresented or underrepresented?*
- *Why do you think that could be?*
- *Are there any near to where we are located? Again, why do you think this could be?*

Extensions

Individual or Small Group - Theatre Artist Presentation or Poster

Have students do further research into their theatre artist. Create a short presentation to share information about this theatre artist with the class, or create a poster or digital slide to share.

Resources such as the [Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia](#) would be great sources.

Assessment for learning

Circulate while students are working independently

Check in with students, offering descriptive feedback and offering prompting questions

Assessment as learning

Co-create success criteria for completion of worksheet

Consolidation

Whole Class > Reflection Question Discussion

Invite students to again respond to Martha Henry's statement "you are standing on their shoulders." Ask them to share what they identify as key contributions of their Canadian theatre legends.

Key Questions for Discussion

- *Now that you've watched videos from the Legends Library, how do you feel about Martha Henry's statement: 'You are standing on their shoulders?'*
- *What do you think were the major contributions of your theatre artist that makes them a Canadian 'theatre legend'?*

Individual > Exit Ticket

Ask students to complete **PDF #1 Canadian Theatre Legend Interview** to consolidate their learning.

Assessment of learning

Assessment of worksheet using co-created success criteria



Canadian Theatre Legend Interview

Objective

Learn more about the theatre scene in Canada by watching interviews with a legendary Canadian theatre professional

Did You Know?

People have been making theatre in Canada for hundreds of years. Professional theatres in Canada burst onto the scene in a major way in the middle of the 1950s - 1970s. Now, there is a well-established history of professional theatre, with artists working all over the country!

Your Task

- 1) **Select** the Canadian theatre legend that you are going to learn more about
- 2) **Watch** some or all of their interview videos at the Canada's Theatre Museum Legend Library
- 3) **Summarize** the information they mention, and their thoughts on theatre-making in Canada
- 4) **Reflect** on what insights you've gained from watching these interviews

My Canadian theatre legend is _____

I watched these interviews (list all the videos you watched here):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. _____
5. _____
6. _____



Identify the places, people, organizations and projects that they mention, and briefly summarize what was said about them. *(Not every artist will speak about each of these things, and some will speak a lot about one or two categories... Feel free to leave blanks, or remake the table on a separate piece of paper, if easier.)*

Places Mentioned	More Details
<i>Example: Whitehorse, Yukon</i>	<i>Was born and raised in Whitehorse, Yukon</i>
People Mentioned	More Details
<i>Example: Jackie Maxwell</i>	<i>Worked with Jackie at the Shaw Festival</i>
Organizations Mentioned	More Details
<i>Example: Charlottetown Festival</i>	<i>A theatre festival in Charlottetown, PEI</i>
Plays/Projects Mentioned	More Details
<i>Example: Da Kink in My Hair</i>	<i>Stage Managed the first professional production</i>

Select the quote that you found most interesting or impactful from your theatre artist about their experiences making theatre as a Canadian. Write your quote below.

Quote:

Timestamp from the video:

Reflect on this quote. Why do you find it interesting? What insight does it give you into the experience of being a Canadian theatre artist?

Consolidate. After watching the video(s) of your theatre artist, why do you think they are included in the Legends Library. What makes them legendary?

Extend. After watching the video(s) of your theatre artist, if you could ask them one additional question about their work as a Canadian theatre artist, what would it be, and why?

My question would be: _____

I would ask this question because: _____

