

Dear Canada: These Are My Words The Residential School Diary of Violet Pesheens Northern Ontario, 1966

By Ruby Slipperjack

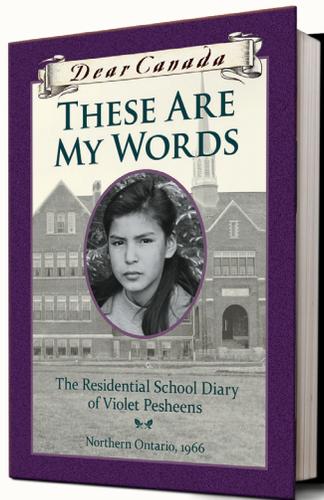
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DISCUSSION GUIDE: Part 1 - General

(TEACHERS: For Ontario curriculum-linked questions by grade, please see Part 2.)

1. Would you have felt like Violet when she arrived at residential school and all her belongings were taken away? What would have been in your "suitcase" if you were going somewhere new and wanted a reminder of home?
2. Imagine that you are in a strange new place. Other children there speak the same language as you, and you could make friends with them, but you are not allowed to talk to them in your own language. What would that feel like? How would you feel if you started to forget some of your own words?
3. Violet makes lists of words she's afraid she might forget. What other strategies can you think of that might help her to remember the words?
4. Based on Violet's descriptions, create a timeline of a typical day at the residential school she is attending.
5. Censorship is the act of an individual, group or government to restrict or suppress any type of expression believed to be objectionable. Was it right for the staff at Violet's residential school to read her mail to her family, and her family's mail to her, and to confiscate any letters that had information they didn't like? In what other ways was Violet censored at residential school?
6. Violet sketches what life was like at home with Grandma, to give herself some comfort when she's at residential school. If you had to be away for a prolonged period of time, what might you draw (or write about) that would most remind you of home? Would it make you more homesick, or less?
7. In your school, do you have to wear a uniform? If so, do you have any choices allowed within the dress code? Why do you think the residential school administrators wanted all the students to dress alike, and even have the same haircuts?
8. How have Violet's roles and responsibilities changed from when she was at home with her family to when she is at residential school? How has that change affected Violet's self-identity? In what ways can we see those effects?



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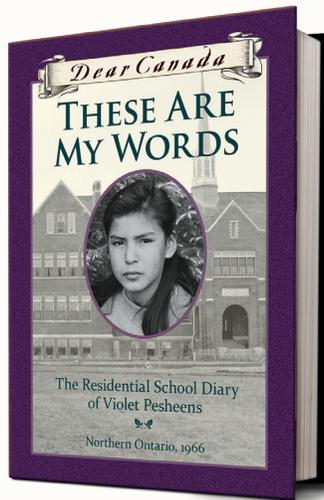
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DISCUSSION GUIDE: Part 1 - cont'd

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9. How are the relationships between Violet and her family different from the relationships between other children or adults at residential school?
10. A number of Violet's diary entries are about food. Why do you think she does that?
11. Compare how Violet celebrates holidays and traditions with her family to those while she is at residential school.
12. Violet draws to help her remember her home with Grandma. Draw a map of Violet's home. Draw a map of the residential school that Violet is attending. In what ways are the two maps different?
13. How is respect shown at Violet's home? How is respect shown at residential school? Are they different or the same?
14. In 2008, former Prime Minister Harper apologized to Indigenous people for the residential school system that they, their parents and grandparents — and even some great-grandparents — experienced. Do you think an apology is enough? What else might be helpful?



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DISCUSSION GUIDE: Part 2 - Questions by grade and expectations from the Ontario Social Studies Curriculum

(Note to teachers outside of Ontario: Please see below for links to other Social Studies curricula.)

Grade 3

B1. demonstrate an understanding of some key aspects of the interrelationship between the natural environment, land use, employment opportunities, and the development of municipal regions in Ontario

1. Using Violet's descriptions, create a map of the land at her home and the relationships people have with it. Compare and draw a map of the residential school land and the relationships with that. How is the land used? How is the land treated? What are the relationships of those two different lands?

Grade 4

B3. identify Canada's political and physical regions, and describe their main characteristics and some significant activities that take place in them

1. Compare the land on which First Nations reserves reside and the activities that take place on that land to the activities that happen in urban centres.

Grade 5

B1. assess responses of governments in Canada to some significant issues, and develop plans of action for governments and citizens to address social and environmental issues

B2. use the social studies inquiry process to investigate Canadian social and/or environmental issues from various perspectives, including the perspective of the level (or levels) of government responsible for addressing the issues

1. Discuss the impact that the residential school system has had on Violet, her mother, grandmother and other family members. What impacts do we see with other students at the school?
2. Read the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015). How are these a good plan of action?
3. What was the purpose of the residential school system, according to government at the time? Research Duncan Campbell Scott and his viewpoints on the topic.

Grade 6

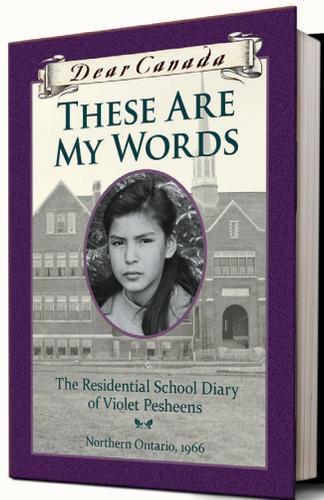
A2. use the social studies inquiry process to investigate different perspectives on the historical and/or contemporary experiences of two or more distinct communities in Canada

A3. demonstrate an understanding of significant experiences of, and major changes and aspects of life in, various historical



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DISCUSSION GUIDE: Part 2 - cont'd

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and contemporary communities in Canada

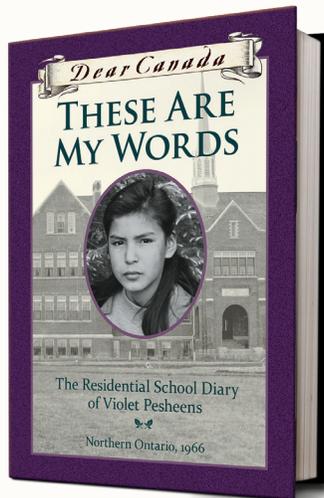
- B1. explain the importance of international cooperation in addressing global issues, and evaluate the effectiveness of selected actions by Canada and Canadian citizens in the international arena
- B2. use the social studies inquiry process to investigate some global issues of political, social, economic, and/or environmental importance, their impact on the global community, and responses to the issues
- 1. Research a First Nations reserve and your local town or city. How might the experiences of people in those two places be the same or different? What makes them unique?
- 2. How has the residential school system affected the Indigenous people who attended and their descendants? What impact would this have on the ways of life and traditions of those groups of people?
- 3. Research and compare the residential school system in Canada and Australia's "Stolen Generation."

Grade 7

- B3. describe various significant events, developments, and people in Canada between 1800 and 1850, and explain their impact
- 1. Church-run schools for Indigenous children began in the 1820s. Discuss the impact and changes of that school system and residential schools for the Indigenous children attending and their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc.
- 2. Research Duncan Campbell Scott and his impact on residential schools.
- 3. What social and cultural impacts did residential schools have on those who attended?

Grade 8

- A2. use the historical inquiry process to investigate perspectives of different groups on some significant events, developments, and/or issues that affected Canada and/or Canadians between 1850 and 1890
- 1. Discuss the residential school system from the perspective of Indigenous peoples and from the government at the time. Compare the perspectives.
- B3. describe various significant events, developments, and people in Canada between 1890 and 1914, and explain their impact
- 2. Research Duncan Campbell Scott in his roles at Indian Affairs. What impact did his political and personal views of Indigenous people have on the residential school system?



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books

Fatty Legs by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton, illustrated by Liz Amini-Holmes (Annick Press)

A Stranger at Home by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton, illustrated by Liz Amini-Holmes (Annick Press)

Righting Canada's Wrongs: Residential Schools: The Devastating Impact on Canada's Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Findings and Calls for Action by Melanie Florence (Lorimer)

Sample Lesson Plans

<http://dragonflycanada.ca/resources/lesson-plans/>

<http://dragonflycanada.ca/resources/lesson-plans2/>

Websites

Resources from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=9

Social Studies Curricula

British Columbia: <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum>

Alberta: <http://www.learnalberta.ca/ProgramOfStudy.aspx?lang=en&ProgramId=564423#>

Saskatchewan: <https://www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca/webapps/moe-curriculum-BBLEARN/index.jsp#>

Manitoba: <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/index.html>

Ontario: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/sshg.html>

Quebec: http://www1.education.gouv.qc.ca/sections/programmeFormation/secondaire1/index_en.asp?page=social

New Brunswick: http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/education/k12/content/anglophone_sector/curriculum_anglophone.html

Prince Edward Island: <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/education-early-learning-and-culture/social-studies-curriculum>

Nova Scotia: <https://sapps.ednet.ns.ca/Cart/items.php?CA=16&UID=MTVTZXAYMDE2MTI1MzAyNjkuMTcuMTQwLjYy>

Newfoundland and Labrador: <http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/curriculum/guides/socialstudies/>

Yukon: http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/curriculum.html#Yukons_current_curriculum

Northwest Territories: <https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/fr/early-childhood-and-school-services/school-services/curriculum-k-12/social-studies-and-northern>

Nunavut: <http://www.gov.nu.ca/education/information/curriculum-learning-resources-0>



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