

# Spotlight on a Town



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**Text Type:** Non-fiction: Description — Newspaper Article

**Guided Reading Level:** O

**Summary:** This newspaper article describes a field trip to historic Birchtown, Nova Scotia. Birchtown was the largest settlement of free Black people in North America in the late 1700s. The article describes the buildings and artifacts from the settlement, which provide insight into the daily lives and hardships of the settlers.

## Text Features

- ▶ title
- ▶ four columns of text
- ▶ text boxes and headings

## Visual Literacy

- ▶ maps
- ▶ photographs
- ▶ coloured initial capital letter
- ▶ coloured captions

## Text Supports

- ▶ photographs and maps that support the text

## Possible Text Challenges

- ▶ newspaper broadsheet format using columns
- ▶ content specific vocabulary related to archeology and historical events: *Black Loyalists, British, American Revolutionary War, period costumes, artifacts, archeological digs, archives, indentured, colonies*

# First Session (to end of second column)

## Reading Strategies

### Comprehension

- ▶ self-monitoring
- ▶ synthesizing

### Working with Words

- ▶ using syllabication, context clues, and prior knowledge to solve unfamiliar words

## Assessment Opportunities

Note each student's ability to:

- ▶ self-monitor by asking questions
- ▶ synthesize to determine the main idea and supporting details
- ▶ use a range of strategies to solve unfamiliar words

## Oral Language Opportunities

- ▶ discussing in groups and pairs



# BEFORE READING

**Teaching Tip:** In addition to the maps in the article, have a world map available for locating Sierra Leone, Africa, and New York.

Word solving/  
making connections

## Activating and Building Background Knowledge

- ▶ Hold up a copy of the article and read the title aloud. Briefly discuss what it means to put the spotlight on something. Explain that this text is about a field trip to a Canadian historic site. If necessary, explain what an historic site is.

*Today we're going to read about a Canadian historic site in Nova Scotia called Birchtown. Do you know what an historic site is?*

Making connections

- ▶ Ask students to think about a time when they toured an historic site. Invite students to tell a partner about a tour they or their family has taken. Model by sharing a similar experience of your own, preferably about a place in your community with which students may be familiar. Try to include some specific concepts and vocabulary that might support them with relevant background knowledge for the article.

*When my family visited L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland, the tour guides were dressed in costumes like the Vikings who used to live there. The guides really helped us to feel like we were there in the time of the Viking settlers. Turn to a neighbour and tell him or her about a similar tour you've taken.*

Text features

## Discussing Supports and Challenges

- ▶ Hand out a copy of the article to each student. Draw their attention to how the article includes columns of text as well as maps and photographs. Discuss the ways readers might choose to read the article.

*You can read this article a couple of ways. You can look at the photographs, text boxes, and maps first; read the text first; or read the text and use the maps and photographs to help understand the text while you're reading.*

Visual literacy

- ▶ Point to the map of Canada located in the top right-hand corner of the page. Briefly discuss the location of Birchtown, Nova Scotia, in relation to where your students live.

Text features/  
making connections

- ▶ Draw students' attention to the first paragraph. Point out that the first paragraph of a newspaper article usually tells readers what it is about—the who, what, when, and where. Read the paragraph and briefly discuss the main points. Can students make connections to any specific details?

*Jason just told us he learned about pioneers who came to Canada around the same time—the late 1700s. That's a great connection Jason. It sounds like this article will be about a special group of settlers coming to Nova Scotia.*

## Print concepts/predicting

- ▶ Note the heading, “On the Trail,” and explain to students that headings are often used in articles to organize information.

*This heading, “On the Trail,” must be referring to the trail mentioned in the first paragraph, and lets us know that we’re going to find out what’s at the beginning of the tour of Birchtown. Let’s see if we’re right.*

**Teaching Tip:** Some of the content specific vocabulary, e.g., *period costumes, the British, American Revolutionary War, and Black Loyalists*, may be difficult for students. If necessary, provide a historical context for the British and the American Revolutionary War and explain the term “loyalists.”

## Self-monitoring

- ▶ Remind students that as they read, they should be checking that what they read sounds right, looks right, and makes sense. Encourage students to share the comprehension strategies they use (e.g., reread the sentence, think about what makes sense in the article, look at the photographs and maps for support).

*What will you do when you come to a part of the article you don’t understand?*

## Self-monitoring

### Setting a Purpose

- ▶ Focus the readers on a comprehension purpose.

*We’re going to read to end of the second column to find out about how Birchtown became a settlement. As you read, ask yourself questions to help you better understand the article. In your notebooks, jot down any questions that you have.*

**Teaching Tip:** You may decide to change the comprehension focus for this text. For information on how to modify a Guided Reading lesson plan to match a new comprehension strategy, see the Guided Reading Teaching Plan Outline in the Toolkit at [www.lpey.ca](http://www.lpey.ca).



## DURING READING

## Self-monitoring

- ▶ Ask students to read the text independently, keeping in mind the purpose for reading.
- ▶ Observe and listen to students as they read quietly, assisting them as needed. Some may require help word solving and with word meaning. Respond to questions and offer prompts to help them problem solve. Possible prompts:
  - Did that make sense? Reread the sentence and think about what would make sense.
  - Did you get answers to your questions as you read on? Do you have any new questions?
  - Why do you think the guides were dressed in period costumes?
  - Where did the tour begin? Where did it go next?

## Analyzing Synthesizing

## Word solving and building

- ▶ Have students use word-solving strategies, such as breaking words into syllables, identifying root words, using smaller words within a word, and using context and picture clues, to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words, e.g., *artifacts*, *archeological digs*, *photocopy*, *archives*, and *model*.

*What strategies do you use? I wasn't sure about the meaning of "artifacts." I kept reading until the article said that they found an axe head, bayonet, and thimble at Birchtown. So I think that "artifacts" might be things researchers find leftover from where people lived a long time ago. I think artifacts must help the researchers learn a lot about what life was like for the people they're studying.*

### ELL Note:

Make a list of challenging words on chart paper or an interactive whiteboard (e.g., *archeological digs*, *version*, *archives*) and discuss them with students.

- ▶ Encourage early finishers to go back to their notes and evaluate their questions.
- ▶ Note successful reading strategies and any remaining challenges.



## AFTER READING

### Self-monitoring

- ▶ Revisit the purpose for reading. Invite students to share the questions they have about Birchtown and the Black settlers and record them on chart paper or a whiteboard. With a partner, encourage students to find answers to their questions in the article.

*Did you jot down any questions that you had while reading? Work with a partner to find answers to your questions in the article.*

### Self-monitoring

- ▶ Have students make note of any unanswered questions and/or new questions they may have.

*What questions are left unanswered? What questions do you still have? Jot down any new questions in your notebooks.*

### Synthesizing

- ▶ Ask students to turn to their partner and share the main points of the article so far. Then share ideas a group.

*How and when did the settlement come to be in Birchtown? Who lived there? Tell your partner about any details you found interesting.*

### Analyzing/synthesizing

- ▶ Ask students to think about a big idea from this part of the article and to help you create a big ideas chart. Model by thinking aloud about some of the possible big ideas. Your chart may look like the following sample:

*I think a really important point is that the settlers came to Nova Scotia as a reward for fighting for Great Britain. Let's record this point on our chart. What other big ideas did you find in the article?*

Spotlight on a Town Big Ideas	
Big Ideas	Supporting Details
#1 Land in Nova Scotia was a reward for fighting on the side of the British	- Black Loyalists were freed from slavery - Black Loyalists were promised free land
#2 Black Loyalists were promised a better life after living as slaves	- Black Loyalists were promised free land; they could now own land as free people
#3	

**Teaching Tip:** When discussing the historical facts with students, encourage them to look back at the text to clarify, rather than to remember the facts by rote.

### Self-monitoring

- ▶ Comment on any effective reading strategies you observed.

*I noticed Adam stopped at the word “archeological,” broke it into the parts “archo” and “logical.” Then he reread it, blending them together to make the word “archeological.” That was great, Adam. Breaking words into parts is a good way to figure out unfamiliar words.*

### Word solving and building

- ▶ Have students reflect on strategies they used to solve unfamiliar words.

*Show me a word that you didn’t know. What strategy did you use to solve that word?*

## Second Session (to end of article)

### Reading Strategies

#### Comprehension

- ▶ synthesizing
- ▶ analyzing

#### Working with Words

- ▶ using syllabication, context clues, and prior knowledge to solve unfamiliar words

### Assessment Opportunities

Note each student’s ability to:

- ▶ synthesize big ideas
- ▶ analyze text and visuals to determine main idea and supporting details
- ▶ use a range of word-solving strategies to solve unfamiliar words

### Oral Language Opportunities

- ▶ discussing in groups and pairs
- ▶ listening to others



## BEFORE READING

### Synthesizing

#### Activating and Building Background Knowledge

- ▶ Ask students to summarize what they've already learned about the Birchtown settlement, referring to the Spotlight on a Town Big Ideas chart.

*Can anyone tell me what they've learned about Birchtown so far? Yes, that's right—Black Loyalists set up the town in the late 1700s. They came to the area for the free land that the British had promised them as a reward for fighting for the British in the American Revolutionary War.*

#### ELL Note:

Some students may need more support summarizing. Provide them with a main idea, and ask them to provide the supporting details.

### Visual features/synthesizing

#### Discussing Supports and Challenges

- ▶ Direct students to the map in the centre of the article and have them use the map to describe the tour of Birchtown so far.

*Let's look at the map in the centre of the page. What is it showing us? Yes, it's a visual representation of the Black Loyalist Heritage Site at Birchtown. Turn to a partner and use the map to help you tell your partner about the tour so far. Where did the tour begin? What locations have we read about so far? When you read the rest of the article today, use this map to help you picture the other stops on the tour.*

### Text features/print concepts/predicting

- ▶ Preview the rest of the article, pointing out the photograph, the Did You Know? and Information text boxes, and the heading "Back on the Trail."

*Let's read this Did You Know? text box together. Why do you think a group of Black Loyalists from Nova Scotia settled in Sierra Leone, Africa, in 1792? We left our settlers just setting up in Birchtown, building pit houses for shelter. I don't think things are going to work out so well for the settlers in Birchtown. What do you think?*

### Synthesizing

#### Setting a Purpose

- ▶ Focus the readers on a comprehension purpose.

*We're going to read the rest of the article to find out what life was like for the Black Loyalists in Birchtown.*



## DURING READING

- ▶ Ask students to read the text independently, keeping in mind the purpose for reading.
- ▶ Observe and listen to students as they read quietly, assisting them as needed. Some may require help word solving and with word meaning. Respond to questions and offer prompts to help them problem solve. Possible prompts:

Self-monitoring

Synthesizing

Analyzing/evaluating

Word solving and building

- Did that make sense? Reread the sentence and think about what would make sense.
- What does the article tell us about the pit house? How hard would it be to live in a pit house? What would be some of the problems living in one?
- How would you describe the life of the Black Loyalists in Birchtown? Easy or hard? Explain.

- ▶ Write the word “generations” and break the word into syllables to show students how they can blend the chunks to solve the bigger word (gen-er-a-tions). Demonstrate figuring out the meaning of the word using context.

*We’re going to reread the first paragraph under the “Back on the Trail” section to help us figure out what “generations” means. What phrase in the paragraph gives you a hint about its meaning? (“Local stories passed down...”)*

- ▶ Note successful reading strategies and any remaining reading challenges.



## AFTER READING

Synthesizing

- ▶ Revisit the purpose for reading.

*Turn to a partner and discuss daily life for the residents of Birchtown, and then we’ll share ideas as a group.*

Synthesizing/analyzing

- ▶ Ask students to summarize what was included on the rest of the tour of Birchtown. Students can use the Black Loyalist Heritage Site map to help them tell a partner highlights from the rest of the tour.

*Tell a partner where the tour went next. Then we’ll share ideas as a group.*

Synthesizing/analyzing

- ▶ Refer students to the Spotlight on a Town Big Ideas chart from the first session. Record a big idea from the last two paragraphs of the article in the Big Ideas column. Ask students to find details from the article that support the big idea, and record these in point form in the Supporting Details column.

Analyzing

- ▶ Have students discuss with the group what has been done to keep the memory of Birchtown alive.

Analyzing/infering

- ▶ Point to the Did You Know? text box, and ask students to discuss with their partners what they think the information in the box means. Clarify comprehension of the text through group discussion. Support comprehension by modelling how to review the article for evidence of why some Black Loyalists might have chosen to return to Africa. If students see the information in the text box as a big idea, it should be added to the big ideas chart, along with the details.

*Let’s review the text for some clues to why some Black Loyalists moved to Serra Leone, Africa.*

Word solving and building

- ▶ Ask students to share a strategy they used when they came across an unfamiliar word, e.g., *squat*, *pitched roof*, *indentured*.

## Self-monitoring

- ▶ Comment on any effective reading strategies you observed.

*I saw Sofia check the Black Loyalist Heritage Site map to see where the Memorial Plaque is in Birchtown. Good readers check the extra information given by the author to help understand the text.*

## Rereadings

- ▶ Provide opportunities for each student to reread the text independently or with a partner.

## Focused Follow-Up

The following activities are optional. Choose those that best meet your students' needs.

### **Research**

- ▶ Make the Spotlight on a Town Big Ideas chart available during further readings and invite students to add to the big ideas and details as they reread. Encourage students to ask questions about the content and to determine an area for further research. Students could research Birchtown, Nova Scotia, pit houses, an archeological or historic site in your local area, or other historic sites in Canada.

### **Debate**

- ▶ Pose the following question to students for discussion: "Why is it important to preserve Canadian history in places like Birchtown and other historic sites?" Offer the opportunity for students to debate the question with your support.

### **Write an Explanation**

- ▶ Ask students to write a short explanation of why it is/is not important to preserve Canadian history in places like Birchtown.