

Komagata Maru

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Critical Challenge

Critical question From the perspective of your assigned role, decide whether or not Canada should accept the migrants from the *Komagata Maru* steamship.

Overview This critical challenge nurtures historical empathy for Canadian attitudes towards Asian immigration. After examining a photograph of the 1914 arrival in Vancouver of the *Komagata Maru* steamship, students adopt one of 33 historical roles drawn from a cross-section of Canadian society. Students endeavour to get inside their character's attitudes on immigration, cultural assimilation and economics. In addition, students learn about the general conditions in the early 1900s and consider the specific events leading to the arrival of the Komagata Maru. From the perspective of their assigned character, students develop arguments for and against accepting the *Komagata Maru* passengers. Working in pairs, students analyze quotes expressing sympathetic and hostile views of various politicians and journalists of the time. In role, students debate whether or not the *Komagata Maru* passengers should have been accepted into Canada and then write a letter justifying their historical character's position.

Objectives

Broad understanding

Historically, immigration has been a hotly contested issue because of the diversity of interests; while many of these appear to be valid perspectives, others seem racist and narrowly self-serving.

Requisite tools

Background knowledge

- knowledge of immigration issues and practices in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
- knowledge of the *Komagata Maru* incident



Criteria for judgment

- criteria for an “authentic” perspective (that is, historically realistic, insightful about the person and the time)



Critical thinking vocabulary



Thinking strategies

- data chart
- rating



Habits of mind

- historical empathy



Suggested Activities

Examine *Komagata Maru* photograph

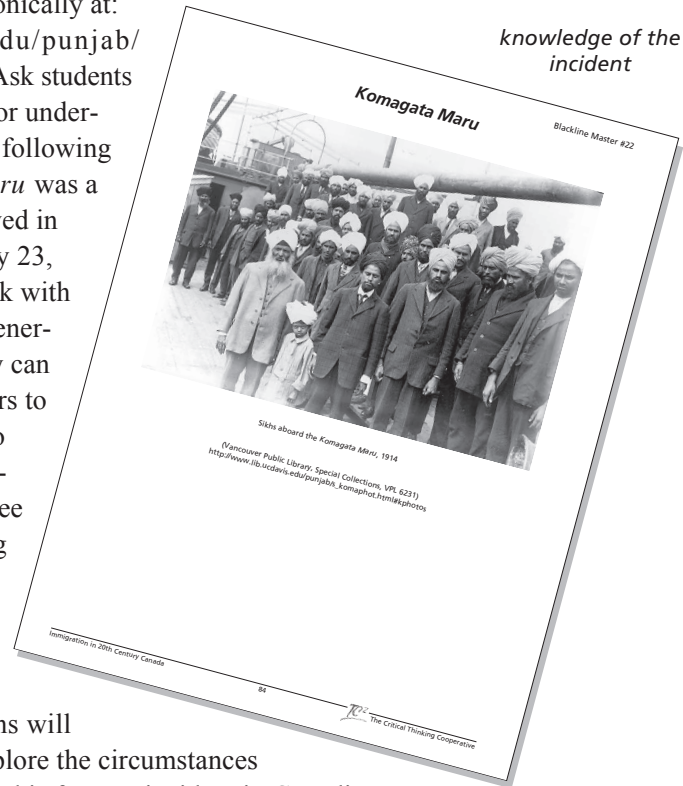
Session One

Blackline Master #22



knowledge of the incident

- Begin this challenge by displaying an overhead transparency of the photograph *Komagata Maru* (Blackline Master #22). This photograph is also available electronically at: http://www.lib.ucdavis.edu/punjab/s_komaphot.html#kphotos.) Ask students if they recognize the picture or understand its subject. Provide the following caption: "The *Komagata Maru* was a steamship from India. It arrived in Vancouver's harbour on May 23, 1914." Invite students to work with a partner for one minute to generate as many questions as they can about the picture. Ask partners to pair off with another group to compare lists, cross off duplicate questions and star the three most thoughtful or interesting questions. Randomly select groups to share their questions. Record these on the board. Inform students that the answers to these questions will likely be revealed as they explore the circumstances and differing perspectives on this famous incident in Canadian immigration history.



Assign historical roles

- Explain that each student is to adopt a role representing a cross-section of Canadian society at the beginning of the 20th century. Students are to assume this role as they examine the circumstances surrounding the arrival of the *Komagata Maru*. They must try to put aside their current personal opinions and attitudes regarding immigration and try to adopt the view that was likely held by their assigned historical character. From a copy of *Early 20th century roles* (Blackline Master #23A-B), cut into slips of paper each of the 32 roles (or however many roles are needed; if additional roles are required assign the same role to more than one student). Randomly distribute one slip to each student.

Blackline Master #23A

Role	Personal data
1. English businessman	
2. Scottish union organizer	Protestant; strong monarchist/imperialist
3. Ukrainian farmer	Vancouver marina worker
4. Scandinavian forest worker	recent immigrant to Manitoba for tree land
5. Vancouver health nurse	seasonally employed on Vancouver Island
6. Wilfrid Laurier, Prime Minister	German ancestry; educated in Ontario
7. Petty criminal	French ancestry; English educated; supports French and English settlement of the West
8. Anglican minister	involved in anti-Asian riots of 1907; English ancestry
9. Sikh relative, wife of a farmer	Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver
10. Balmant Singh	one of approximately 5,000 mainly Sikh Indian immigrants living in BC
11. Komagata Maru passenger, steamship worker	Kalra Dhan Society; legal representative for the Komagata Maru passengers
12. Japanese fisherman	one of 22 Sikhs allowed to land because he had previously been in Canada
13. Aboriginal leader	lives in Stewiaston; owns his own fishing boat
14. Aboriginal woman	Cree, northern Quebec; traditional trapper/hunter
15. Chinese herbal medicine specialist	member of Moukwan band; lives on the Fraser River in south Vancouver
16. Chinese maid	one of a small number of Chinese women in BC
17. Vancouver industrialist	owner of False Creek heavy steel yards
18. Quebec rural farmer	French; Roman Catholic; prevented from moving west by Sifton's school policy
19. Quebec textile dress shop owner	French-speaking woman; Roman Catholic; lives in Montreal
20. Armand Lavigne, Quebec politician	spokesperson against Sifton's English-only school policy in the West

Immigration in 20th Century Canada

The Critical Thinking Consortium

Explain individual profiles

- When students have been assigned their characters, display an overhead transparency of *Individual profile* (Blackline Master #24). Explain that students are to use the personal background about their assigned individual to imagine their character's position on the four issues listed in Blackline Master #24. Introduce each of the scales and point out that students need to provide two reasons to justify each rating. It may be helpful to work through an example with the class to assist them in seeing how they might deduce their character's attitudes. Possible ratings and rationale for a British colonel's views are suggested in *Boer War veteran profile* (Blackline Master #25). Model the two-step process that students might follow:

- imagine the individual's background and experiences which seem relevant to the issue under consideration;
- suggest a rating for each attitude.



historical empathy

Complete individual profiles

- Distribute a copy of Blackline Master #24 to each student. Remind students to place themselves in the minds and times of their assigned character and imagine the issues from that perspective. Explain that the objective is to encourage historical empathy—the ability to see things sensitively through the eyes of people who lived in earlier times. To help students develop a more informed perspective, distribute *Immigration in the early 1900s* (Blackline Master #26A-B) to each student (or pair of students). Direct students to read the briefing sheets and to use the information to infer their character's attitude on each issue and identify reasons for each rating.

Individual profile Blackline Master #24

Name: _____

Indicate on the scales your character's attitude on each issue. Provide two supporting reasons for each rating.

My role: _____

Loyalty to Canada

5 strong nationalist 4 3 2 1 strong anti-nationalist

Personal data: _____

Views on immigration

5 highly selective 4 3 2 1 very welcoming

Name: _____

My role: *British Boer War veteran*

Boer War veteran profile Blackline Master #25

Personal data: *war colonel; strong British imperialist*

Loyalty to Canada

5 strong nationalist 4 3 2 1 strong anti-nationalist

• He is likely a strong monarchist and British nationalist because he fought for Britain in the Boer War.

• His ties to Canada may lie more with his membership in the British Empire than with any deep patriotism.

Views on immigration

5 highly selective 4 3 2 1 very welcoming

• If he is British and upper class, he would likely favour immigrants from the British Empire, including those from India.

• Fighting in South Africa during the Boer War may have created a low estimation of the worthiness of non-British peoples.

Cultural perspective

5 single dominant culture 4 3 2 1 strong multiculturalist

• Being a strong British imperialist suggests he would strongly favour immigrants abandoning their cultural traditions for the behaviours and values of English-Canadian society.

• Possibly influenced by Rudyard Kipling he may hold the view that "Britain is better".

Economic orientation

5 strongly capitalist 4 3 2 1 strongly socialist

• As a colonel he may not have had much experience as a labourer or appreciate the value of unions.

• Because he is not an independent business owner, he may not have strong capitalist ties, but may appreciate the economic benefits that industry and business provide.

Immigration in 20th Century Canada

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The Critical Thinking Cooperative

Immigration in the early 1900s Blackline Master #26

British Columbia was very much a frontier on the west coast of the continent, far removed from the more densely settled eastern provinces and the centre of national government in Ottawa. Dramatic swings between strong economic growth and deep recession meant that workers would be in demand for a while and then experience massive unemployment. The jobs of the early 1900s were often low-skilled work, in mines, mills and canneries. Fewer skilled workers were required than in the past, and many of the jobs were among the general lack of education and specialized skills in the workforce. Workers were easily replaced by immigrants provided a pool of labour, but many were exploited (i.e., hired to work the toughest jobs at the lowest wages) and endured working conditions that established workers would not tolerate. There was no social safety net or minimum wage, paid vacations or limits on working hours and wages of employment. When people became unemployed, they were often desperate until they found a new job.

In keeping with a frontier economy, the great majority of writers and immigrants were men. Men often preceded women as immigrants because either their work was temporary and there was no point in uprooting their families or because the families would follow later after the men often had a disruptive effect on the communities in which they resided. Given the harsh economic and personal conditions, it is easy to see why immigrants and personal to hand together into ethnic communities such as Chinatown or industry-related places. These communities provided what was often the sole source of financial and cultural support and social contact for many immigrants.

When Canada needed labour for large-scale projects such as the railway, the door was opened to various immigrant groups. Over three million immigrants came to Canada between 1891 and 1914, many drawn by job prospects offered by the building of the transcontinental railway, settlement of agricultural land in the Prairies and increased industrialization. The Canadian government actively recruited immigrants because they were seen to be key to prosperity and growth. Instead of having categories of immigrants as Canada has today, immigrants were often dealt with on the basis of country or nationality. British and American citizens were preferred over other ethnic groups. However, the increased demand for labour resulted in significant numbers of other groups being actively recruited. For example, when Canada's priority was to settle the prairie grasslands, massive advertising was done in eastern and southern European countries whose people were thought to be suitable for farming in this region. Increasingly in the 20th century, larger numbers of immigrants arrived from Asia (Japan, India and China) and non-English speaking parts of Europe.

Newcomers to Canada were not constantly welcomed. Some residents, who may have themselves immigrated or come from immigrant families, feared the loss of their jobs to people who would work for much lower wages. On the other hand, business leaders with large-scale projects often recruited labourers as an easy way to cut costs, since they were able to employ them at considerably less than the one-half the salary paid to workers already established in Canada. For others, recruiting immigrants who would become assimilated into the "Canadian" way of life was more important than building the labour force. Many people of British descent wanted immigrants to adopt the behaviour and values of English-Canadian society and to relinquish their cultural traditions they brought from their home countries. Aboriginal people saw immigrants as a serious threat to their traditional way of life. For many aboriginal communities, immigration meant the loss of land and resource opportunities, the introduction of diseases and a swelling "foreign" population. Others residents of Canada welcomed ethnic differences and saw Canada as a cultural mosaic or patchwork where the social landscape would reflect a variety of immigrant cultures, each an important part of Canadian society. French-Canadian nationalists, for example, valued their distinct language, religion and legal system and saw heavily-based immigration as a way to reduce Canada's conformity to British traditions and practices.

Immigration in 20th Century Canada

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knowledge of history of immigration

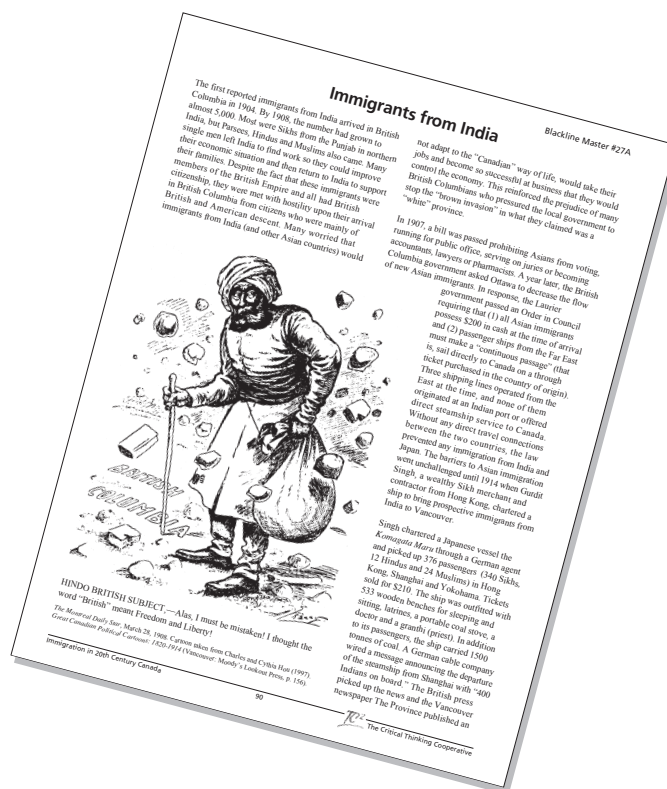
familiarity with context of time

Record
initial reasons

- Once the character profiles are complete, invite students to explore their character's views on accepting the *Komagata Maru* passengers as immigrants to Canada. Ask students to record on a sheet of paper divided into two columns all plausible reasons why their character would and would not allow the ship's passengers into Canada. Encourage students to look for the conflicting tensions that might arise for their character. For example, labourers may worry that Asian immigrants would take away their jobs; on the other hand, as fellow workers, they might be sympathetic to the immigrants' need to support their families. Inform students that they will have opportunities to record additional arguments as they learn more about the *Komagata Maru* incident. As a class, you may wish to briefly discuss the reasons that students generated.

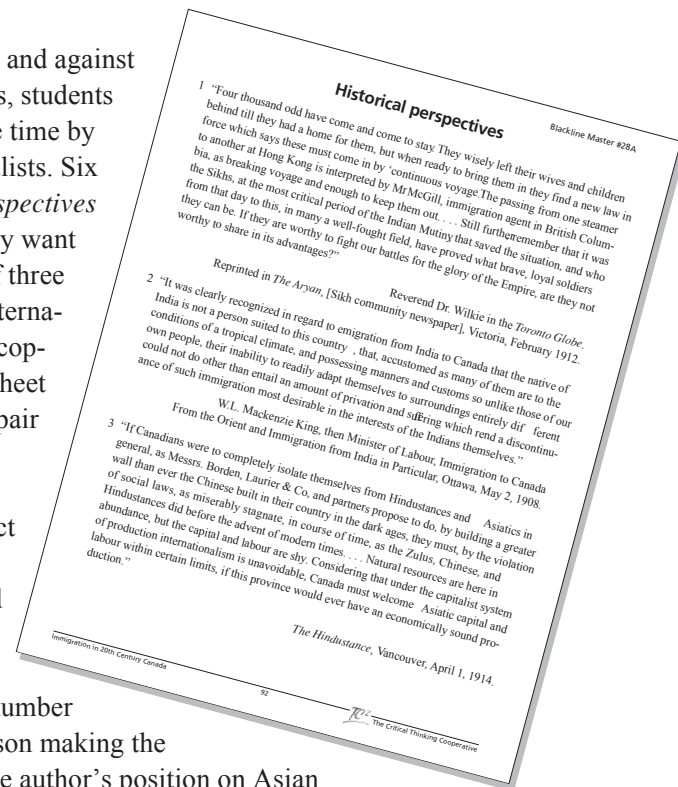
Develop background
knowledge

- Provide students with additional information about the *Komagata Maru* incident by distributing a copy of *Immigrants from India* (Blackline Master #27A-B) to each student or pair of students. This briefing sheet does not reveal the eventual outcome of the incident so as not to influence students' thinking. After reading the sheet, students are to list on their "reasons" sheet additional pro and con arguments for accepting the ship's passengers as immigrants. Again, you may wish to invite students to share their positions as a class, with a partner or in small groups.



Record additional reasons

- As one final source of arguments for and against Asian immigration in the early 1900s, students are to analyze comments made at the time by politicians, public figures and journalists. Six quotes are found on *Historical perspectives* (Blackline Master #28A-C). You may want to create overhead transparencies of three sheets for the entire class to read. Alternatively, duplicate approximately five copies of each sheet and distribute one sheet to each pair of students. When each pair has analyzed its sheet, circulate the sheets in two rotations until all pairs have examined all three sheets. Direct students to read the quotes on Blackline Master #28A-C and record their analysis on *Analyzing perspectives* (Blackline Master #29). Point out that students are to indicate the number of the quote and the name of the person making the statement. Students are to identify the author's position on Asian immigration and summarize the arguments presented. When partners have analyzed the quotes, they are to decide, according to their own character's perspective, the extent to which their character would agree or disagree with the arguments and provide a reason(s) for the assigned rating. To record their analyses of the six quotes, every student will need three copies of Blackline Masters #29. If you anticipate that students will have difficulty with this task, complete the analysis of the first quote as a class.



Record additional reasons

- When students have recorded their analyses of the quotes on Blackline Master #29, invite them to add on their "reasons" sheet any new arguments for and against accepting the *Komagata Maru* passengers.

Session Three

Pose critical question

- Having assembled a range of relevant arguments, students are now to propose their historical character's position on whether or not to accept the passengers of the *Komagata Maru*. Introduce the critical task:

From the perspective of your assigned role, decide whether or not Canada should accept the migrants from the Komagata Maru steamship.

Explain that students will first debate the issue as a class and then write out their final position and justification. Before students begin their deliberations, introduce the criteria for an "empathic" decision. Encourage students to consider two criteria when reaching their decision and developing their reasons:

- is historically realistic given the times;
- represents a thoughtful understanding of the character (i.e., presents the character's perspective sensitively and intelligently).



criteria for
"authentic"
perspective

**Debate
the issue**

- Invite students to organize their chairs in a large “U” shape (or simply to sit on the floor in this shape). Students whose characters are strongly opposed to accepting the immigrants should locate themselves at one tip of the “U”; those whose characters strongly support acceptance of the immigrants should locate themselves at the other tip. Students whose characters have more mixed opinions should locate themselves along the continuum in a position representing their relative inclination for one side or the other. Those students who are torn on the question and cannot decide should likely locate themselves in the middle of the “U”. In role, students are to introduce themselves and present their character’s arguments, ensuring that they thoughtfully portray their character. Encourage students to present their character in an intelligent and sympathetic light. Although students’ arguments must be consistent with their character and historically realistic, the goal is to try to make their characters seem as sensible and reasonable as possible. Periodically during the discussion, invite any students whose character might be persuaded by arguments expressed to move along the continuum to a more appropriate location. At some point in the discussion, you may also want to ask students in the very middle to choose a side and explain what arguments inclined them one way or the other.



U-shaped debate

**Justify their
final position**

- Assign students to write a letter in role to a friend who has just heard of the *Komagata Maru* incident and wants to know the historical character’s view on what should have been done with the passengers. Encourage students to refer to the arguments and evidence they have gathered in their individual research, group activities and U-shaped debate in preparing their position and justification. Remind students that their decision and justification must be historically realistic and thoughtfully represent their character’s perspective. Explain that the letter should contain the following
- the character’s position on the issue;
 - reasons for the decision;
 - reasons why the character might be drawn to the other option.

**Debrief
the outcome**

- Provide students with the following facts about the outcome of the *Komagata Maru* incident:
- after two months of legal battle with the Canadian government, the immigration appeal filed on behalf of the passengers by the Sikh community was rejected on the grounds that their immigration was illegal (the passengers did not have the \$200 per person that was required to enter BC and the ship had not arrived via direct passage from India);
 - only 24 passengers, who claimed to be Canadian residents, were given permission to stay;
 - the *Komagata Maru* and its passengers were forced to leave Vancouver harbour on July 23, 1914 and return to Hong Kong;
 - World War I broke out in August 1914, while the ship was en route to India.
 - Sikhs in Vancouver resented the government’s handling of the *Komagata Maru* incident and retaliated by attacking police spies and shooting several people. Mewa Singh, a member of the Sikh

community, was convicted and executed for killing an immigration official.

Evaluation

Blackline Masters #30-32

Assess the rating

- Assess each student's ratings of their character and rationale recorded on Individual profile (Blackline Master #24) using the rubric *Assessing the rating* (Blackline Master #30). According to this rubric, the assignment is worth 10 marks and is assessed on two criteria:

- plausible ratings,
- thoughtful reasons.

Assess the perspective

- Assess students' analysis of quotes on *Analyzing perspectives* (Blackline Masters #29) using the rubric *Assessing the perspectives* (Blackline Master #31). According to this rubric, the assignment is worth 10 marks and is assessed on two criteria:

- accurate and complete summary of authors' positions and reasons,
- plausible ratings.

Assess the arguments

- Assess each student's identification of pro and con arguments on the *Komagata Maru* by awarding one mark for each plausible reason up to a maximum of five marks for the pros and five marks for the cons.

Assess the justification

- Assess students' letter justifying their character's position on the *Komagata Maru* passengers using the rubric *Assessing the justification* (Blackline Master #32). According to this rubric, the assignment is worth 10 marks and is assessed on two criteria:
- realistic and thoughtful understanding of the reasons for the decision,
- realistic and thoughtful understanding of the reasons for the opposing position.

Name: _____

Use the following rubric to assess students' ratings and justification of their character's position on the four issues. Award intermediate marks for evidence falling between the descriptions.

Assessing the rating			
Plausible ratings	Underdeveloped	Competent	Well developed
None of the ratings seem plausible, given the character's background.	Two of the ratings seem plausible, given the character's background.	All four ratings seem very plausible, given the character's background.	
Provides no thoughtful reasons to support the assigned ratings.	Provides one thoughtful reason for each rating.	Provides two very thoughtful reasons for each of the four ratings.	
1	3	5	
TOTAL			5 / 10

Comments: _____

Name: _____

Use the following rubric to assess students' analyses of the six historical quotes. Award intermediate marks for evidence falling between the descriptions.

Assessing the perspectives			
Accurate and complete summary	Underdeveloped	Competent	Well developed
None of the ratings seem plausible, given the character's background.	Two of the ratings seem plausible, given the character's background.	All four ratings seem very plausible, given the character's background.	
Provides no thoughtful reasons to support the assigned ratings.	Provides one thoughtful reason for each rating.	Provides two very thoughtful reasons for each of the four ratings.	
1	3	5	
TOTAL			5 / 10

Comments: _____

Name: _____

Use the following rubric to assess the students' justification of their character's position on the Komagata Maru. Award intermediate marks for evidence falling between the descriptions.

Assessing the justification			
Reasons for decision	Underdeveloped	Competent	Well Developed
The reasons for the chosen position are historically unrealistic and show no understanding of the character's perspective.	The reasons for the chosen position are generally realistic and show some understanding of the character's perspective.	The reasons for the chosen position are very realistic and thoughtfully represent the character's perspective.	
Provides no reasons to support the other position that are historically realistic and sensitive to the character's perspective.	Provides reasons to support the other position that are generally realistic and show some understanding of the character's perspective.	Provides reasons to support the other position that are very realistic and thoughtfully represent the character's perspective.	
1	3	5	
TOTAL			5 / 10

Comments: _____

Immigration in 20th Century Canada

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Debate the question of redress

Explore other issues in role

Extension

- Invite students to discuss whether or not governments should apologize and provide redress to the descendants of victims of historical discrimination. There are many examples to illustrate this issue:
 - Chinese Canadians who were required to pay the “head tax” have applied to the government for redress.
 - Japanese Canadians who were removed from their land and homes during World War II received an apology and compensation from the Canadian government.
 - Aboriginal people in Canada have raised the issue in the context of residential schools and forced assimilation.
 - African Americans in the US have launched a class action suit relating to their ancestors’ enslavement.
 - In Europe, the Pope has apologized to Islamic peoples for the Crusades.
- The historical characters developed in this challenge represent a wide spectrum of early 20th century Canadian society, allowing for nation-wide perspectives. Involve students in applying these roles to other issues in Canadian history, including the following:
 - imperialism or nationalism? Canada’s involvement in British imperial policy, including the Boer War and Laurier’s Naval Bill;
 - conscription in World War I;
 - banning of the potlatch ceremony;
 - women’s suffrage;
 - Winnipeg General Strike.

References

“Komagata Maru,” part of *Pioneer Asian Indian Immigration to the Pacific Coast* site of the University of California (Davis), contains photographs, background information, and references, including novels, on this incident: <http://www.lib.ucdavis.edu/punjab/koma.html>

Komagata Maru



Sikhs aboard the *Komagata Maru*, 1914
(Vancouver Public Library, Special Collections, VPL 6231)
http://www.lib.ucdavis.edu/punjab/s_komaphot.html#kphotos

Blackline Master #23A

Early 20th century roles

Role	Personal data
1. English businessman	Protestant; strong monarchist/imperialist
2. Scottish union organizer	Vancouver marina worker
3. Ukrainian farmer	recent immigrant to Manitoba for free land
4. Scandinavian forest worker	seasonally employed on Vancouver Island
5. Vancouver health nurse	German ancestry; educated in Ontario
6. Wilfrid Laurier, Prime Minister	French ancestry; English educated; supports French and English settlement of the West
7. Petty criminal	involved in anti-Asian riots of 1907; English ancestry
8. Anglican minister	Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver
9. Sikh relative, wife of a farmer	one of approximately 5,000 mainly Sikh Indian immigrants living in BC
10. Balwant Singh	Kalsa Diwan Society; legal representative for the <i>Komagata Maru</i> passengers
11. <i>Komagata Maru</i> passenger, sawmill worker	one of 22 Sikhs allowed to land because he had previously been in Canada
12. Japanese fisherman	lives in Steveston; owns his own fishing boat
13. Aboriginal leader	Cree, northern Quebec, traditional trapper/hunter
14. Aboriginal woman	member of Musqueam band; lives on the Fraser River in south Vancouver
15. Chinese herbal medicine specialist	Chinatown business community leader; fluent in Mandarin and some English

Blackline Master #23B

Role	Personal data
16. Chinese maid	one of a small number of Chinese women in BC
17. Vancouver industrialist	owner of False Creek heavy steel yards
18. Quebec rural farmer	French; Roman Catholic; prevented from moving west by Sifton's school policy
19. Quebec textile/dress shop owner	French-speaking woman; Roman Catholic; lives in Montreal
20. Armand Lavergne, Quebec politician	spokesperson against Sifton's English-only school policy in the West
21. Canadian Pacific Railway vice president	oversees the railway in western Canada; strongly in favour of settling the Prairies
22. High school student	King Edward Secondary School, Vancouver
23. Female university student	McGill University Extension (later UBC)
24. Sto:lo Aboriginal person	lives on the Fraser River near Yale, BC; depends on salmon fishing
25. Japanese Canadian labourer	works in Nanaimo coal mine
26. James Dunsmuir, industrialist	Nanaimo coal mine owner; anti-union
27. Irish dock worker	unemployed, English-speaking Roman Catholic, lives in Toronto
28. Wife of wealthy industrialist	philanthropist and church charity organizer
29. Mayor of Vancouver	elected by property owners; British ancestry
30. Steamer captain	Norwegian settler in Campbell River; pilots a passenger service to coastal towns
31. School teacher	Seymour Elementary, Vancouver; educated in USA; female
32. Saw mill worker	Russian-born labourer recently arrived in Canada

Individual profile

Indicate on the scales your character's attitude on each issue. Provide two supporting reasons for each rating.

My role: _____

Personal data: _____

Loyalty to Canada 5 strong nationalist 4 3 2 1 Strong anti-nationalist • •
Views on immigration 5 highly selective 4 3 2 1 very welcoming • •
Cultural perspective 5 single dominant culture 4 3 2 1 strong multiculturalist • •
Economic orientation 5 strongly capitalist 4 3 2 1 strongly socialist • •

Blackline Master #25

Boer War veteran profile

My role: British Boer War veteran Personal data: war colonel; strong British imperialist

Loyalty to Canada	5	4	3	2	1
	strong nationalist			Strong anti-nationalist	
• <i>he is likely a strong monarchist and British nationalist because he fought for Britain in the Boer War;</i> • <i>his ties to Canada may lie more with its membership in the British Empire than with any deep patriotism;</i>					
Views on immigration	5	4	3	2	1
	highly selective			very welcoming	
• <i>if he is British and upper class, he would likely favour immigrants from the British Empire, including those from India;</i> • <i>fighting in South Africa during the Boer War may have created a low estimation of the worthiness of non-British people;</i>					
Cultural perspective	5	4	3	2	1
	single dominant culture			strong multiculturalist	
• <i>being a strong British imperialist suggests he would strongly favour immigrants abandoning their cultural traditions for the behaviours and values of English-Canadian society;</i> • <i>possibly influenced by Rudyard Kipling he may hold the view that "British is better";</i>					
Economic orientation	5	4	3	2	1
	strongly capitalist			strongly unionist	
• <i>as a colonel he may not have had much experience as a labourer or appreciate the value of unions;</i> • <i>because he is not an independent business owner he may not have strong capitalist ties, but may appreciate the economic benefits that industry and business provide.</i>					

Blackline Master #26A

Immigration in the early 1900s

British Columbia was very much a frontier on the west of the continent, far removed from the more densely settled eastern provinces and the centre of national government in Ottawa. Dramatic swings between strong economic growth and deep recession meant that workers would be in demand for a while and then experience massive unemployment. The jobs of the early 1900s were often low-skilled work in mines, mills and canneries. Fewer skilled workers were required than are employed in the modern economy and, with the general lack of education and specialized skills among the workforce, workers were easily replaced by any other worker who was willing to do the job. The flood of immigrants provided a pool of labour but many were exploited (i.e., hired to work the toughest jobs at the lowest wages) and endured working conditions that established Canadians would not tolerate. There was no social safety net—no minimum wage, paid vacations or limits on working hours and age of employment. When people became unemployed, they were often desperate until they found a new job.

In keeping with a frontier economy, the great majority of settlers and immigrants were men. Men often preceded women as immigrants because either their work was temporary and there was no point in uprooting their families or because the families would follow later after the men had established a stable economic footing. Large numbers of men, far away and long separated from their families, often had a disruptive effect on the communities in which they resided. Given the harsh economic and personal conditions, it is easy to see why immigrant groups tended to band together into ethnic communities such as Chinatown or industry-related ghettos. These communities provided what was often the sole source of financial and cultural support and social contact for many immigrants.

When Canada needed labour for large-scale projects such as the railway, the door was opened to various immigrant groups. Over three million immigrants came to Canada between 1891 and 1914, many drawn by job prospects offered by the building of the transcontinental railway, settlement of agricultural land in the Prairies and increased industrialization. The Canadian government actively recruited

immigrants because they were seen to be key to prosperity and growth. Instead of having categories of immigrants as Canada has today, immigrants were often dealt with on the basis of country or nationality. British and American citizens were preferred over other ethnic groups. However, the increased demand for labour resulted in significant numbers of other groups being actively recruited. For example, when Canada's priority was to settle the prairie grasslands, massive advertising was done in eastern and southern European countries whose peoples were thought to be suitable for farming in this region. Increasingly in the 20th century, larger numbers of immigrants arrived from Asia (Japan, India and China) and non-English speaking parts of Europe.

Newcomers to Canada were not consistently welcomed. Some residents, who may have themselves immigrated or come from immigrant families, feared the loss of their jobs to people who would work for much lower wages. On the other hand, business leaders with large-scale projects often saw immigrant labourers as an easy way to cut costs, since they were able to employ them at considerably less—as little as one-half the salary paid to workers already established in Canada. For others, recruiting immigrants who would become assimilated into the “Canadian” way of life was more important than building the labour force. Many people of British descent wanted immigrants to adopt the behaviour and values of English-Canadian society and to relinquish the cultural traditions they brought from their home countries. Aboriginal people saw immigrants as a serious threat to their traditional way of life. For many aboriginal communities, immigration meant the loss of land and resource opportunities, the introduction of diseases and a swelling “foreign” population. Others residents of Canada welcomed ethnic differences and saw Canada as a cultural mosaic or patchwork where the social landscape would reflect a variety of immigrant cultures, each an important part of Canadian society. French-Canadian nationalists, for example, valued their distinct language, religion and legal system and saw broadly-based immigration as a way to reduce Canada's conformity to British traditions and practices.

Immigrants from India

The first reported immigrants from India arrived in British Columbia in 1904. By 1908, the number had grown to almost 5,000. Most were Sikhs from the Punjab in northern India, but Parsees, Hindus and Muslims also came. Many single men left India to find work so they could improve their economic situation and then return to India to support their families. Despite the fact that these immigrants were members of the British Empire and all had British citizenship, they were met with hostility upon their arrival in British Columbia from citizens who were mainly of British and American descent. Many worried that immigrants from India (and other Asian countries) would not adapt to the “Canadian” way of life, would take their jobs and become so successful at business that they would control the economy. This reinforced the prejudice of many British Columbians who pressured the local government to stop the “brown invasion” in what they claimed was a “white” province.

In 1907, a bill was passed prohibiting Asians from voting, running for public office, serving on juries or becoming accountants, lawyers or pharmacists. A year later, the British Columbia government asked Ottawa to decrease the flow of new Asian immigrants. In response, the Laurier government passed an Order in Council requiring that (1) all Asian immigrants possess \$200 in cash at the time of arrival and (2) passenger ships from the Far East must make a “continuous passage” (that is, sail directly to Canada on a through ticket purchased in the country of origin). Three shipping lines operated from the East at the time, and none of them originated at an Indian port or offered direct steamship service to Canada. Without any direct travel connections between the two countries, the law prevented any immigration from India and Japan. The barriers to Asian immigration went unchallenged until 1914 when Gurdit Singh, a wealthy Sikh merchant and contractor from Hong Kong, chartered a ship to bring prospective immigrants from India to Vancouver.

Singh chartered a Japanese vessel the *Komagata Maru* through a German agent and picked up 376 passengers (340 Sikhs, 12 Hindus and 24 Muslims) in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Yokohama. Tickets sold for

\$210. The ship was outfitted with 533 wooden benches for sleeping and sitting, latrines, a portable coal stove, a doctor and a *granthi* (priest). In addition to its passengers, the ship carried 1500 tonnes of coal. A German cable company wired a message announcing the departure of the steamship from Shanghai with “400 Indians on board.” The British press picked up the news and the Vancouver newspaper *The Province* published an article under the heading, “Boat Loads of Hindus on Way to Vancouver.” Canadian authorities and the citizens of Vancouver prepared for the ship’s arrival. Sikh immigrants who had already settled in Vancouver collected money and provisions to support the newcomers.

After an 18-day voyage, the *Komagata Maru* arrived in Victoria on May 21st. Everyone on board was vaccinated and the vessel left for Vancouver two days later. When it arrived in the harbour it was met by protesting residents who tried to prevent the landing of the first of a perceived flood of immigrants from India. City authorities quarantined the boat and forbid anyone from landing. (They were afraid that the Vancouver Sikh community might try to smuggle passengers ashore.) Immigration officials, who saw the ship’s arrival as an attempt to challenge the immigration laws, deemed the passengers inadmissible to Canada. The captain was ordered to disembark but the passengers would not let him off. The boat remained in the harbour for two months, without access to supplies of food and water. At one point armed police tried to storm the ship, but the passengers drove them away by pelting them with coal and other objects. The legal assistant hired by the Vancouver Sikh community battled with the Canadian government to help the passengers of the *Komagata Maru* gain entry to Canada. The legal council tried to convince a court hearing that the new “continuous passage” law violated the Immigration Act. This appeal was not successful.

Historical perspectives

- 1 “Four thousand odd have come and come to stay. They wisely left their wives and children behind till they had a home for them, but when ready to bring them in they find a new law in force which says these must come in by ‘continuous voyage.’ The passing from one steamer to another at Hong Kong is interpreted by Mr. McGill, immigration agent in British Columbia, as breaking voyage and enough to keep them out. . . . Still further, remember that it was the Sikhs, at the most critical period of the Indian Mutiny, that saved the situation, and who from that day to this, in many a well-fought field, have proved what brave, loyal soldiers they can be. If they are worthy to fight our battles for the glory of the Empire, are they not worthy to share in its advantages?”

Reverend Dr. Wilkie in the *Toronto Globe*. Reprinted in *The Aryan*, [Sikh community newspaper], Victoria, February 1912.

- 2 “It was clearly recognized in regard to emigration from India to Canada that the native of India is not a person suited to this country, that, accustomed as many of them are to the conditions of a tropical climate, and possessing manners and customs so unlike those of our own people, their inability to readily adapt themselves to surroundings entirely different could not do other than entail an amount of privation and suffering which rend a discontinuance of such immigration most desirable in the interests of the Indians themselves.”

W.L. Mackenzie King, then Minister of Labour, Immigration to Canada From the Orient and Immigration from India in Particular, Ottawa, May 2, 1908.

Blackline Master #28B

- 3 “If Canadians were to completely isolate themselves from Hindustances and Asiatics in general, as Messrs. Borden, Laurier & Co, and partners propose to do, by building a greater wall than ever the Chinese built in their country in the dark ages, they must, by the violation of social laws, as miserably stagnate, in course of time, as the Zulus, Chinese, and Hindustances did before the advent of modern times. . . . Natural resources are here in abundance, but the capital and labour are shy. Considering that under the capitalist system of production internationalism is unavoidable, Canada must welcome Asiatic capital and labour within certain limits, if this province would ever have an economically sound production.”

The Hindustance, Vancouver, April 1, 1914.

- 4 “British Columbia is a whiteman’s country. The coming of the hordes of Asiatic labourers will keep wages down and crowd the whitemen to the wall, since the whiteman cannot, nor will come down to the Asiatic labourers’ low standard of living. Forty or fifty of them will live in a house that rents for \$18 to \$20 a month. Forty or fifty labourers mean a score of families, each one living in its own house and a score of the men to stay at boarding houses or restaurants. These Hindus pay less than a dollar a month a piece for rent, and they board themselves, so you see a white man would starve at wages which mean wealth to a Hindu.”

Fred Lockley, “The Hindu Invasion: A New Immigration Problem,” *Pacific Monthly*, 17, 1907.

Blackline Master #28C

- 5 “What we face in British Columbia and in Canada today is this—whether or not the civilization which finds it highest exemplification in Anglo-Saxon British rule shall or shall not prevail in the Dominion of Canada. I am absolutely convinced that we cannot allow indiscriminate immigration from the Orient and hope to build up a nation in Canada on the foundations upon which we have commenced our national life [Applause]. . . . In the Orient, at our doors, there are eight hundred million Asiatics—and mark you I care not how high a value they place on their civilization—it is distinct in all its features from that which we hold dear. Eight hundred millions—the least tremor from that source would unquestionably swamp us by the weight of numbers.”
H. H. Stevens, Conservative MP, speech to a public meeting, Vancouver, June 22, 1914.
- 6 “The *Komagata Maru*’s side ladder is just a little flight of stairs pasted against her venerable side, but to me it is the road to a far country, in which there are mosques and muezzines, magic, heathens bowing down to wood and stone, real Arabian Nights entertainments, temple bells gorging, and a good many more than forty thieves. The *Komagatu Maru* reproduces the romantic East with spectacular and atmospheric realism, particularly atmospheric . . . Thursday night when we went off to the Komagata they were conducting religious services on board. . . . From the ‘tween decks came music which has no business in Vancouver harbour. It is a long way from home and should go home and stay there. But it is charming, though creepy. I knew that just on the other side of the steamer’s iron skin dark bronze people were calling out on dark old gods with unpronounceable names, gods whose millions of worshippers are the scrapings and offal [waste] of the world, the inhabitants of nations which are the castaway [shipwrecked; discarded] countries of the earth.”

Pollough Pogue, “The Sequestered Singhs,” *The Sun*, Vancouver, July 11, 1914.

Analyzing perspectives

In quote #____ by _____ the main arguments are

My character would ☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree
with this position because

In quote #____ by _____ the main arguments are

My character would ☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree
with this position because

Assessing the rating

Use the following rubric to assess students' ratings and justification of their character's position on the four issues. Award intermediate marks for evidence falling between the descriptors.

	Underdeveloped	Competent	Well developed
Plausible ratings	None of the ratings seem plausible, given the character's background. 1	Two of the ratings seem plausible, given the character's background. 3	All four ratings seem very plausible, given the character's background. 5
Thoughtful reasons	Provides no thoughtful reasons to support the assigned ratings. 1	Provides one thoughtful reason for each rating. 3	Provides two very thoughtful reasons for each of the four ratings. 5

Total /10**Comments:**

Assessing the perspectives

Use the following rubric to assess students' analyses of the six historical quotes. Award intermediate marks for evidence falling between the descriptors.

	Underdeveloped	Competent	Well developed
Accurate and complete summary	None of the summaries of the authors' positions and arguments accurately represent the quotes. 1	Summaries of the authors' positions and arguments are largely accurate, but often miss an important aspect. 3	Summaries of all of the authors' positions and arguments accurately and comprehensively represent the quotes. 5
Plausible ratings	None of ratings seem plausible, given the explanation and the character's background. 1	Three of the ratings seem plausible, given the explanation and the character's background. 3	All of the ratings seem very plausible, given the explanation and the character's background. 5

Total /10

Comments:

Assessing the justification

Use the following rubric to assess the students' justification of their character's position on the *Komagata Maru*. Award intermediate marks for evidence falling between the descriptors.

	Underdeveloped	Competent	Well developed
Reasons for decision	The reasons for the chosen position are historically unrealistic and show no understanding of the character's perspective. 1	The reasons for the chosen position are generally realistic and show some understanding of the character's perspective. 3	The reasons for the chosen position are very realistic and thoughtfully represent the character's perspective. 5
Reasons for other position	Provides no reasons to support the other position that are historically realistic and sensitive to the character's perspective. 1	Provides reasons to support the other position that are generally realistic and show some understanding of the character's perspective. 3	Provides reasons to support the other position that are very realistic and thoughtfully represent the character's perspective. 5

TOTAL /10

Comments: