

# Social Issues in Canada

**Grade level: 12**

## Introduction

The following curriculum unit was developed for Sociology 12 students in Nova Scotia by Erin Dunn-Keefe, a literacy coach for the South Shore Regional School Board. Sociology 12 is designed to introduce students to the scientific study of human society and interaction. The unit is divided into two parts. Both lessons support Unit 4 - Social Organization: Living Together as Humans, as defined by Nova Scotia Department of Education curriculum standards.

The first lesson, "Socialization: Divorce in Canada," introduces students to how social factors, such as divorce, can shape human behavior and uses content from EBSCO's Canadian Points of View Reference Source. The second lesson, "Social Issues Seminar," asks students to synthesize what they learned in the first lesson to develop their own mini-seminars based on other societal issues in Canada, again using content from Canadian Points of View Reference Source.

## Objectives

- Analyze and respond to a variety of texts and readings related to sociological concepts and theories.
- Engage in thoughtful discussion and debate about divorce in Canadian Society.
- Identify and reflect on how a social factor, like divorce, can shape our human behavior.

## Curriculum Outcomes

- 4.3
  - Examine the role of social institutions in the organization of human societies.
  - Analyze examples of social institutions, including the family.
  - Evaluate the contribution of social institutions to social organization.
- 4.4
  - Investigate a social issue that serves as a good example of social organization and related concepts.
  - Assess the influence of groups on the issue.
  - Examine aspects of social stratification relevant to the issue.
  - Investigate the role(s) of relevant social institutions to the issue.

## Materials

- Computer/tablet
- Access to Canadian Points of View Reference Source

---

## Lesson One: Socialization - Divorce in Canada

### Procedure

#### Pre-reading Warm-up Discussion

- As the family is a major socialization agent, what role does divorce play in children's lives?
- What are the divorce rates in Canada?
- Is there a social stigma associated with divorce?
- Does it matter when a family experiences divorce?
- What do children learn from divorce?

#### Shared Reading

The entire class will read the article, "Divorce Rates: An Overview."

#### Independent Reading (15-20 minutes)

Group A: Read "POINT: Divorce harms children." Annotate the article. Highlight key points. Indicate the strongest argument to support this thesis and the weakest.

Group B: Read "COUNTERPOINT - Divorce is a reality for many families." Annotate the article. Highlight key points. Indicate the strongest argument to support this thesis and the weakest.

#### Partner Discussion (5 minutes)

Students will find a partner from their group and share their annotated notes. They will agree on the strongest and weakest argument.

#### Small Group (8 minutes)

The teacher will then create groups made up of two members from each of Group A and B. These groups of four will present their point and counter point to each other, focusing on the material and data presented in their readings. The aim is for each group to convince the opposing group to switch sides. At the end of the discussion, the teacher will ask if any group members would like to switch sides.

#### Medium Group (8 minutes)

Bring groups of four into groups of eight. Continue the discussion. At the end of the discussion, ask if any group members would like to switch sides.

### Full Group Discussion

1. How does divorce socialize children?
2. As a functionalist, what is the purpose of divorce? What is the manifest function of divorce? What might be some latent functions?
3. The family is a social institution. Does divorce create function or dysfunction in this institution? Explain.
4. Did anyone switch sides? Why?
5. Were members more convinced by the research data or their personal experiences?
6. When lawmakers and politicians create laws, budget funding and invest in communities and infrastructure, should they make decisions based on the research data or their personal experiences? Explain.

### Assessment

Using the divorce lesson as a model, students will develop their own mini-seminars based on other societal issues in Canada. (See next page.)

## Lesson Two: Social Issues in Canada - Seminar

Seminar groups will consist of four to five students. Each student will prepare a seminar on a different social issue in Canada. Students will use the Canadian Points of View Reference Source on EBSCO as a reference to develop their seminar.

### Possible Topics

- Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
- Discrimination Against Aboriginal People
- Medical Marijuana
- Refugee Crisis
- Clean Drinking Water for First Nations
- Family Violence
- Terrorism and the Media
- Sentencing for Juvenile Offenders
- Sex Offender Laws
- Body Cameras for Police Officers
- Electronic Cigarette Use
- Two-tiered Medical System
- Year-Round Schooling
- Mental Illness Awareness and Research
- Censoring Student Newspapers
- Video Games Impact on Children
- Cell Phone Searches
- Transgender Washroom Use

## Procedure

### Preparation

1. Each group will be assigned readings based on the chosen topic. For example, if Group A students choose to do seminars on Clean Drinking Water for First Nations, Family Violence, Terrorism and the Media, and Sentencing for Juvenile Offenders, the whole group will read these articles.
2. Each group member reads the Overview, Point and Counterpoint articles for each topic. The readings are a mandatory part of preparation for the seminars.
3. Seminar presenters will use the seminar question structure handout to prepare discussion questions for the group. (See Designing Effective Seminar Questions handout.)
4. Group members will participate by answering questions, contributing ideas to the discussion and asking questions. Each valid contribution earns one point to a maximum of 20 points. (See Participation Tracking handout.)
5. Students choose a topic, read the articles and write five seminar questions.

6. Students read the articles for the other group members' topics. They take notes and prepare to discuss in the next class.

### **Seminars Begin**

7. The seminar leader introduces their topic with a brief summary then leads the discussion, asking questions, encouraging participation, and digging deeper for more explanation. The leader will also keep tally for the participation record. Each seminar will last roughly 20 minutes.
8. Second seminar begins and so on and so forth until the last group is finished.
9. Group de-briefing.

## Designing Effective Questions for Seminars

*"A good question is both a question that your fellow students can answer and a question that requires analysis, synthesis, interpretation, and critical thinking in order to answer it. Your questions based on a particular passage should both encourage and challenge us to articulate and uncover meaning in the text. "- (Center for Teaching and Learning - Stanford University)*

*"The art and science of asking questions is the source of all knowledge. "-Thomas Berger*

### 5 EFFECTIVE QUESTION STYLES

1. Ask questions about quality that require your classmates to make judgments about the social issue raised in the article.  
Examples:
  - What is the most effective way to promote equality in society?
  - Why should all members of society be concerned about bias in the news?
2. Ask ethical or moral questions that require judgements about particular concepts or issues raised in the article.  
Examples:
  - Under what circumstances would you consider it justifiable to lie, cheat or steal?
  - Is it ethical (right or wrong) for people to have the option to select genetic traits to reduce their chance of having a child with a medical condition?
  - What are the benefits and drawbacks of the Youth Restorative Justice program?
3. Ask questions that require your classmates to compare and contrast what they have read with something with which they are familiar/ knowledgeable.  
Example:
  - We read about the issue of bullying and the impact it had at one high school in Vancouver. Compare this to what you see happening around us at our school.
4. Ask questions that require classmates to explain cause and effects in relation to the social issue.  
Example:
  - What are the common causes of domestic violence and why do these make it hard to find effective solutions?
5. Ask questions that require your classmates to apply their knowledge to a new situation.  
Example:
  - The article discusses the development of various types of government. If you were shipwrecked on a deserted island what features of these governments would you use to design a new system? Why?

## Bloom's Taxonomy Word Bank

These terms might help you word/phrase your questions!

analyze  
assess  
combine  
compare  
conclude  
connect  
convince  
decide  
discriminate  
explain  
infer  
integrate  
judge  
modify  
rank  
rearrange  
recommend  
select  
separate  
summarize  
support  
what if?

---

## Problem Questions!

1. Avoid questions that ask your classmates to simply retrieve information. These types of questions do not require your classmates to think for themselves.

Example:

- What did the author say was the biggest challenge in reducing the crime rate in Halifax?

2. Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. This will end the conversation quickly!

Example:

- Did you agree with the author's point that genetic engineering is amoral?

3. Avoid leading questions that make it difficult for someone to express thoughts different from your own.

Example:

- Don't you think that needle exchange programs just increase substance abuse?

4. Avoid slanted questions that reveal your own opinion about the topic.

Example:

- Why is the political system in Canada so corrupt?

## Works Cited

"Effective\_questions.html." Center for Teaching and Learning - Stanford University. 20 Feb. 2009.  
<[http://ctl.stanford.edu/handouts/web/effective\\_questions.html](http://ctl.stanford.edu/handouts/web/effective_questions.html)>.

Wilhelm, Jeffrey D. *Engaging Readers and Writers with Inquiry: Promoting Deep Understandings in Language Arts and the Content Areas with Guiding Questions*. Wilmington: Teaching Resources, 2007.



---

## Social Issues Seminar: Participation Tracking

Seminar Leader: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Issue: \_\_\_\_\_

Group participants: For every valid comment, question or contribution to the discussion, award one check mark.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_