

# CANADIAN GEOGRAPHIC IN THE CLASSROOM

**Article** ‘Commemorate Canada—The Group of Seven’  
**Issue** May/June 2020



## Time:

90 Minutes

## Developed by:

Canadian Geographic Education

## Overview/focus question:

Who were the Group of Seven? What inspires the artwork of the Group of Sevens? How does the geography of Canada influence their artwork?

## Subject/topic:

The Group of Seven Voyager Biography

## Grade level:

Grade 4 - 8

## Learning Goals

- Students will learn the differences between a memoir, an autobiography and a biography.
- Students will learn about the Group of Seven and its individual members.
- Students will learn about the different geographical features that inspired the Group of Seven’s artwork.
- Students will create a Google Earth Voyager biography about one of the members of the Group of Seven.

## Materials Needed

- Paper and pencil
- Print or online copies of “The Big Picture - Celebrating Canada’s Grandeur” in the May/June 2020 edition of *Canadian Geographic* (pages 10-11)
- Computers to access the *Canadian Geographic* article “[Celebrating 100 years of the Group of Seven](#)” by Angelica Haggert
- Computers to access Google Earth and for research

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## Connection to the Canadian Geography Framework

### Concepts of Geographic Thinking

- Spatial significance
- Interrelationships
- Geographic perspective

### Inquiry Process

- Acquire geographic resources
- Evaluate and draw conclusions
- Communicate
- Reflect and respond

### Geospatial Skills

- Foundational elements
- Spatial representation
- Technologies

## Lesson Description

### Minds on:

Students will learn the differences between a memoir, an autobiography and a biography. Students will create either a memoir, autobiography or biography including at least 10 dates and events and then share with a group.

### Action:

Students will be introduced to the Group of Seven and who they are by reading “The Big Picture - Celebrating Canada’s Grandeur” and “Celebrating 100 years of the Group of Seven.” The class will be split up into eight groups. Each group will create a biography on one of the Group of Seven members or Tom Thomson and share it through Google EarthVoyager. Students will focus on geographical locations that were important to the member’s life.

### Conclusion:

Each group will share their Google Earth Voyager biography with the class and students will explore each Voyager biography and answer discussion questions.

## Lesson Implementation

### Minds on

Ask students what the differences are between a memoir, an autobiography and a biography. Have students brainstorm elements of memoirs, biographies and autobiographies and what makes them unique.

Key elements of a memoir:

- Collection of personal memories from the first-person point of view
- Not as formal as an autobiography or biography
- Narrow time frame
- Focused on feelings, memories and emotions
- Facts are more flexible to make a story

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Key elements of an autobiography:

- Written from the first-person point of view, usually by the person themselves or with the help of ghostwriter
- Covers a broad range of time, usually covering the author’s whole life until the present
- Focused on facts and is fact-checked

Key elements of a biography:

- Written about another person from the third-person point of view
- Often written about a well-known person or celebrity
- More formal and objective than memoirs and autobiographies
- Covers a broad range of time, usually covering the subject’s whole life until the present
- Focused on facts and is thoroughly fact-checked

Instruct students that they are going to write a brief memoir, autobiography or biography. Students are going to include at least 10 dates and events that are important to their story. They have to follow the key elements of whichever format they choose. If they chose to do a biography, the students can do this in pairs. Give students approximately 15 minutes to complete this activity. Since it is an introductory activity, students should complete this in point form. Once students have completed this, they will share it with a partner or with the class.

## Action

Introduce the Group of Seven by asking students to read “The Big Picture - Celebrating Canada’s Grandeur” in the May/June 2020 edition of *Canadian Geographic* (pages 10-11) as well as the *Canadian Geographic* article “Celebrating 100 years of the Group of Seven” by Angelica Haggert. This will introduce students to the members of the Group of Seven as well as their art style. Since it has been 100 years since the Group of Seven officially came together, it is important to reflect on their artwork.

After students have read the article and looked at the different paintings, divide the class into eight groups. Assign each group one of the members:

- Franklin Carmichael
- Lawren Harris
- A.Y. Jackson
- Franz Johnston
- Arthur Lismer
- J.E.H. MacDonald
- F.H. Varley
- Tom Thomson (unofficial member)

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Note: Although Tom Thomson was never an official member of the group, he had a major influence on the group's artwork, so it is beneficial for students to learn about him while learning about the Group of Seven.

Instruct students that they are going to research their members and create a biography for the artist. The biography should include information that relates to physical locations, such as locations of some of their famous paintings.

Once students have found all of the information they would like to include, they are going to create a Google Earth Voyager story to display all of the places included in their biography. The Google Earth Voyager program will allow them to save locations along with text and images that they will use to create a story about the artist's life.

## Conclusion and Consolidation

Students will present their Google Earth Voyager biographies to the class, allowing them to explore these geographic locations together. The Google Earth Voyager biographies can be shared with the whole class to allow students to explore them individually, where they can examine the geographic elements that influenced each artist's work.

To finish this lesson, ask students the following reflection questions:

- What were specific geographic features that stood out as being important to each artist's work?
- What was your favourite art piece from any of the Group of Seven members?
- Why is Canada's landscape important to the Group of Seven?

## Extend your geographical thinking

- Include more members from the Group of Seven, outside of the original group.
- Have students create a Google Earth Voyager story about their lives.
- Have students complete a research project about a location featured in a specific painting.
- Discuss the different geographical features seen in paintings, such as mountains, islands, rivers, clouds and trees, and try to identify the ones seen in the paintings.

## Modifications

- Instead of creating a Google Earth Voyager story, encourage students to visit the different geographical locations to explore through Google Earth.
- Instead of creating a Google Earth Voyager story, students can create a powerpoint presentation that includes screen captures from each of the places they visited on Google Earth.
- Allow students to choose which of the Group of Seven members they would like to research.

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- Create a Google Earth Voyager autobiography to share with the class as an example.
- Groups can be modified to include more than just the original seven members plus Tom Thomson. Include some of the later members or unofficial members of the group, depending on how many students you have and how many students you prefer to have in each group.
- Set the amount of Google Earth Voyager locations to a specific number of places they must visit.
- Alter the number of life events in their memoir, autobiography or biography.
- Students can share their Google Earth Voyager story online rather than presenting to the class.

## Assessment Opportunities

- Assess students learning based on their participation in the discussion questions.
- Collect and assess students' learning based on the completion of their memoir, autobiography or biography.
- Assess student's oral presentation skills during their Google Earth Voyager presentations.
- Assess learning skills such as responsibility, collaboration and organization.