

**Teachers' Notes**

## **What is the artist really saying about the Franklin Expedition?**

*This MysteryQuest investigates the explicit meanings and implicit attitudes found in an artist's representation of the Franklin Expedition*

*A critical thinking challenge to accompany*

*Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History*

*The Franklin Mystery: Life and Death in the Arctic*

<http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/40/indexen.html>

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*based on an approach developed by The Critical Thinking Consortium (TC<sup>2</sup>)*

[www.tc2.ca](http://www.tc2.ca)

**Ages:** 11–14

**Courses**

Canadian history, social studies

**Key topics**

- history of Canada
- exploration of northern Canada
- perspective of Inuit peoples

**Critical Challenges**

- Identify the explicit meanings and implicit attitudes found in an artist's representation of the Franklin Expedition.

- Create a list of five words or phrases to describe the artist's implied attitudes about the Franklin Expedition.

### **Broad understanding**

- Students will learn that an artist's representation of a place and/or event not only reveals his or her idea of "what happened," but also contains important, though often hidden, clues about the artist's attitudes towards the people, places and events depicted.
- Students will learn about the Franklin Expedition and attitudes towards the events, people and places.

### **Requisite tools**

#### **Background knowledge**

- British exploration in Arctic environments
- Inuit perspectives

#### **Criteria for judgment**

- criteria for plausible interpretation of an artist's explicit meanings and implied attitudes (for example, consistent with the evidence, supplies specific details)

#### **Critical thinking vocabulary**

- inference and evidence
- explicit meanings versus implied attitudes

#### **Thinking strategies**

- charting W5 questions
- charting evidence

#### **Habits of mind**

- historical empathy
- attention to detail

### **Independent study**

This lesson can be used as a self-directed activity by having students work individually or in pairs through the guided instructions and support material found at [MysteryQuest 40](#).

### **Whole class activities**

On the following pages are suggested modifications of the self-guided procedures found on the MysteryQuest website for use with a class of students. For convenience, each piece of support material and set of procedures are linked next to the relevant suggestions for whole class instruction.

## Suggested activities

### Introduce Franklin and Arctic Canada

- Read, or have students read, MysteryQuest 40 [Introduction](#) and [The task](#).
- Begin with a brainstorming activity about what students know about the Canadian Arctic, where it is, who lives there now, and who lived in or travelled there in the past.
- Guide students in reading the first two paragraphs of the introduction to the Franklin Mystery and the timeline of the events:  
[The Mysteries of Franklin's Last Voyage Timeline](#)
- Ask students to read about Franklin's men, who were travelling through the region in their expedition to find the Northwest Passage:  
[The Mysteries of Franklin's Last Voyage Northwest Passage](#)
- Display the map of Franklin's voyage and remind students that while the Arctic was a foreign place for Franklin and his crew, a place that was simply a passage between two other places (England and China), it had been home to the Inuit for thousands of years by the time Franklin arrived.  
[Franklin's Voyage from England to the Arctic](#)
- Direct students to look at the illustrations of and artifacts from Inuit life here:  
[Arctic Homeland](#)

### Learn to explore the *explicit meanings* of a painting

- Display or distribute [Deciphering the explicit meanings \(Activity Sheet 1\)](#)
- Display [Julius von Payer: Starvation Cove \(1897\)](#).
- Explain that this painting is perhaps the most famous representations of the Franklin Expedition. What can this painting tell us about what happened? More information about the painting can be found in MysteryQuest 40.
- Explain how the W5 questions outlined in [MysteryQuest 40, Step 2](#), can help explore the *explicit meanings of the painting*—the artist's description of what happened. Describe how each W5 question invites an **inference**—a conclusion drawn from the **observed evidence**—about the painting.
- Give students an example of an inference from observed evidence (for example, “where”—see MysteryQuest 40 for details), and demonstrate its placement on the chart.

If desired, students might be divided into groups, with each group completing one of the W5s in the chart. Remind students to match each inference with at least one piece of evidence they have observed. Groups could then report their inferences and observed evidence back to the class.

### **Establish criteria for a plausible inference**

- Once students have completed the first two columns in the chart, tell them that not all inferences are equally convincing; some are less plausible than others. Describe the *two criteria of a plausible inference* (consistent, and specific or detailed) as outlined in [MysteryQuest 40, Step 3](#).
- Ask students to revisit what they wrote in the “Inferences” and “Evidence observed” columns. Keeping in mind the two criteria, which are the most plausible inferences? Which are the least?
- Ask them to complete the “Plausibility ranking” column to rank the overall plausibility of their own inferences (are they consistent; specific and detailed) for each W5 question on a scale from 10 (highly plausible) to 1 (unlikely) based on the number of details included and their consistency with other evidence in the painting or on the website.
- Instruct students to revise any less plausible inferences to make them more consistent or detailed.
- Working in pairs, students then complete the “Plausibility ranking” column and rank their partner’s inferences for each W5 question on a scale from 10 (highly plausible) to 1 (unlikely), based on the number of details included and their consistency with other evidence in the painting or on the website.

### **Uncover the painter’s implied attitudes**

- Explain that painters do not simply describe or imaginatively recreate people and events. Hidden (or implicit) messages about what the artist *really thought and felt* about the people and events can often be found in a painting. These *implied attitudes* are usually not as direct, clear or easy to see as the explicit meanings.
- Distribute [Deciphering von Payer’s implied attitudes \(Activity Sheet 2\)](#). Ask students to use the skills they developed inferring the explicit meanings of the painting to complete the first two columns of the chart to explore von Payer’s implied attitudes towards Franklin’s men, the environment and the expedition as a whole. If desired, the class could be divided into groups to explore one of these three categories.
- Working in pairs, students then assess their partner’s inferences on a scale from 10 (highly plausible) to 1 (unlikely), based on the number of details included and their consistency with other evidence in the painting or on the website.

### **Drawing conclusions**

- Direct students to the final column of the chart and instruct students to create five words or phrases that effectively summarize the painter's implied attitudes. Provide an example of a word or phrase that sums up von Payer's *implied attitude* to Franklin's men, the environment and the expedition as a whole. If students have been working in groups on only one of these areas, challenge them to come up with five for the one they are working on.

### **Evaluation**

Use the assessment rubric, [\*Assessing the evidence and inferences\*](#) to evaluate this lesson.

### **Extensions**

- Have students work through the same lesson using one or more of the three other [paintings by Julius von Payer on the website](#): *Abandoning the Vessels*, *The Death of Sir John Franklin* or *The Bible Reading*.

### **Support materials**

[Activity Sheet 1: Deciphering the explicit meanings](#)

[Activity Sheet 2: Deciphering von Payer's implied attitudes](#)

[Assessment Rubric: Assessing the evidence and inferences](#)

### **Documents in the case**

[The Mysteries of Franklin's Last Voyage](#)

[Northwest Passage](#)

[Timeline](#)

[Franklin's Voyage from England to the Arctic](#)

[Arctic Homeland](#)

[Julius von Payer: \*Starvation Cove\* \(1897\)](#)

[Julius von Payer: \*Starvation Cove\* \(1884\)](#)