



Privileged Life in Early 20th Century Montreal

This MysteryQuest identifies how physical environment, material possessions and social capital contributed to and sustained the Redpath family's upper class life in early 20th century Canada.

A critical thinking challenge to accompany

Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History
The Redpath Mansion Mystery

<http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/32/indexen.html>

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based on an approach developed by The Critical Thinking Consortium
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Ages

14-16

Courses

Canadian history, social studies, civics, law

Key topics

- cause and consequence
- life of upper class families in Montreal in early 20th century Canada

Critical Challenge

- Determine which aspect of privileged life was most supported and maintained by the environmental, material and social wealth possessed by the elite in early 20th century Montreal.

Broad Understanding

- Students will learn about the attributes of wealth, and how various dimensions of wealth contribute to and sustain a privileged lifestyle.

Requisite Tools

❖ **Background knowledge**

- awareness of the social and economic inequality in early 20th century Montreal
- knowledge of environmental, material and social dimensions of wealth
- knowledge of various aspects of a privileged lifestyle (e.g., privacy, comfort).

❖ **Criteria for judgment**

- criteria for a thorough explanation (e.g., identifies relevant connections, is plausible, supported with examples)

❖ **Critical thinking vocabulary**

- evidence

❖ **Thinking strategies**

- data chart

❖ **Habits of mind**

- 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 on [MysteryQuest 32](#).

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 support material and set of procedures are linked next to the relevant suggestions for whole class instruction.

Suggested Activities

Set the context

- Display the two photographs of Montreal in 1896 found in the “Where They Lived” section of [Evidence in the Case](#). Invite students to carefully examine the photographs to draw inferences about how wealthy people lived, worked and played at that time. Use students’ analysis of these images as a springboard to discuss how ‘settings’ can offer clues to the past.

Discuss the challenge

- Use [The Task](#) as a guide to explain that students will work in groups of three to examine primary and secondary sources dealing with the environmental, material and social dimensions of wealth. Eventually students will be asked to determine which of these three dimensions most supported and maintained various aspects of the Redpath family's privileged life.

Learn about the family

- Using [Step 1: Learn about the family](#) as a guide, describe the social and economic connections of the English-speaking elite of Montreal in early 20th century Canada. Direct each student group to the four documents in the Background section of [Evidence in the Case](#) to learn more about the Redpath family, their home and influence in the community.

Look for evidence of wealth

- Use [Step 2: Look for evidence of wealth](#) as a guide to introduce three dimensions of wealth: where the elite lived, what they owned and their social capital (their connections and opportunities). Direct each of the students in a group to examine the photographs, artefacts and brief documents for one of the three dimensions listed in the Redpath Legacy section of [Evidence in the Case](#). Encourage students to look for obvious and less obvious indicators of wealth (e.g., materials used, what is not stated but implied in the text). Distribute one copy per group of the chart, [Indicators of Wealth](#) for students to summarize their findings.
- Arrange for various groups to share the result of their investigations into the indicators of wealth.

Consider the benefits of wealth

- Using [Step 3: Consider the benefits of wealth](#) as a guide, suggest that wealth offers certain benefits but also brings responsibilities. Discuss the five kinds of benefits that wealth brings (e.g., comfort, prestige, privacy) and brainstorm specific examples of these benefits (e.g., no need to do dishes). Then discuss possible responsibilities that wealth brings (e.g., obligation to donate to charities).
- Distribute a copy of [Benefits of Wealth](#) to each group of students. Direct students to use the chart to record examples of the different benefits that the Redpath family enjoyed because of its wealth. Arrange for various groups to share the result of their analysis.

Consider how wealth maintains privilege

- Use [Step 4: Explore how wealth maintains privilege](#) as a guide to explain the final task. Distribute to each student a copy of [The Most Important Factors](#). Direct students individually to indicate which of the three dimensions of wealth (where they lived, what they owned and their connections/opportunities) most contributed to each of the five kinds of benefits that the family enjoyed. Ask students to provide supporting reasons.

- Compile a class tally of the conclusions for each kind of benefit and invite students to discuss their reasons for each conclusion.

Evaluation

Use the rubric [*Assessing Evidence and Factors*](#) to assess how well students were able to identify the indicators and benefits of wealth and show how wealth supported various aspects of the Redpaths' privileged life.

Extension

- Invite students to individually or as a class to pursue the suggested activities listed in [*Extension*](#).