



Overview

This project invites students to write a fact-based, geographical story about a Parks Canada-administered place that they discover through the Our Country Parks Canada Explorer Map. The project emphasizes tracking project process through discrete steps, starting with map exploration of geographical features, story ideation, research, writing, and publishing. Students will connect geographical and historical facts to the imaginative work of storytelling. Finished stories will highlight and celebrate Canada's special places for their peers.

Time

Approximately one week or 5 sessions of working time.

Subject/topic

Social studies, geography, history, Canadian studies, narrative, storytelling, writing

Grade

6-8

Materials

- access to devices for Our Country Explorer Map
- Finding Canada Project Toolkit printouts
- paper for optional printing
- pens and other art materials for illustrations and good copy preparation

1. Reflection and Prediction

1. Use the **Project: Finding Canada Storymap** to introduce the scope and purpose of the project. Lead students through the **Launch Organizer** to access prior knowledge and experiences and set a baseline for what they will be looking for in their exploration of the Our Country Parks Canada Explorer.
2. Take time to review what goes into telling a good story. To develop working concepts of effective storytelling, use one of the **Map Stories** to carry out a shared reading together. Before the reading starts, ask students what they think makes a good story. You can also use one of the **Media Stories** as an example of non-fiction storytelling in magazine articles.
3. Before reading, ask:
 - What are the most important elements of a story?
 - What makes a story interesting?Answers can include interesting characters, detailed setting, creative description, a clear sense of conflict and resolution, and a coherent plot.
4. During the reading, pause periodically to ask what they think about different sections of the story. After the reading, revisit the features they named before reading and ask if they would like to change them, and whether the story they read met the criteria for a good story.
5. Let them know that for this project, they will be creating a fact-based geographical story, and that this means their story will be imaginative but grounded in accurate facts and features about a real place that is administered by Parks Canada. Provide access to the **Finding Canada Project Organizer**. Guide students through the steps for project completion, including researching and writing their story, as well as the criteria for excellence that will help them create a powerful geographical story.
6. Then, step back to have a longer discussion about what makes a geographical story different from other forms of storytelling. Help students arrive at the idea that in addition to the fundamental traits of good storytelling, geographical stories contain accurate facts and descriptions of geographical features, including landforms, climate, habitat and species relationships, as well as cultural elements such as politics and history.
7. Revisit the **Launch Organizer** and ask students to reconsider their choices about what makes a place special. Let them know that they will be choosing a special place connected to Parks Canada to write about next, and that their choices here can help guide their decision.

2. Select, Research, and Organize

1. Students can use the **Explorer Quiz** independently, in groups, or in a teacher-led class setting to learn more about how Parks Canada protects and promotes special places across the country, and to hear stories from different people about their personal perspectives on different sites. The **Theme Storymaps** provide information and examples of the wide range of experiences that define Parks Canada-administered places. Students can explore these in sequence or based on their results from the quiz.





Learning Objectives

- explore and reflect on first-person narratives about Parks Canada places
- use maps and geographic thinking (location, region, human-environment) to organize and reflect on different places and experiences
- choose one Parks Canada site using the Explorer to be the basis and inspiration for a fact-based geographical story
- write a story that includes the most important features of their Parks Canada site
- choose photographs or create art to support their story and cite sources
- show evidence through portfolio: facts, stories, and geography (map/locator)

Related Resources

Protecting Nature and Culture with Parks Canada: Giant Floor Map and Resource Guide

2. Provide access to the **Project Launch: Choosing a Site** worksheet. After walking through the criteria in the worksheet, introduce students to the interactive map. Allow students 45-60 minutes to navigate the interactive map, engage with sites and stories, and complete the steps outlined on the worksheet. When finished, they should have chosen a site and be ready to proceed to the next step of the project.
3. Provide access to the **Project Focus 1: Map** worksheet. Review the geographical features that they can research and integrate into their maps. Students will need access to an art or image editing app on their devices to complete the custom map worksheet image or print it out to modify as a hardcopy. Allow 45-60 minutes for students to complete their map worksheet.
4. The next step of the project is for students to connect their choice of place to a plausible experience to form the narrative basis of their story. Provide access to the **Project Focus 2: Story Experience**. To provide context about the kinds of experiences connected to their place, invite students to revisit the **Theme Storymaps** and to explore additional information about Parks Canada through **Media Stories** and **Related Resources**.
5. Students can next use **Project Focus 3: Details** to research and develop fact-based, descriptive language for the key elements of their story. To build student capacity, you may choose to model examples of the descriptive, sense-based language in the worksheet.
6. To integrate a meaningful Indigenous connection to their story planning, provide access to **Project Focus 4: Indigenous Connections**. Review the **Indigenous Voices Storymap** and revisit the related Map Stories. Review the protocol for consulting and acknowledging Indigenous sources and voices and the importance of respect, humility, and care when representing Indigenous communities. For additional support on respectful engagement with Indigenous perspectives, see **What Does Respectful Representation Look Like?**

3. Create and Finalize

1. Now that students have completed the pre-writing steps of the project, they should have all of the parts they need to create a complete draft. Provide access to **Project Focus 5: Story Structure** and ask students to bring together the work they have completed in previous steps into a story draft.
2. Once they are satisfied with their draft, students can pair up and do a round of peer editing using the **Revise and Share** worksheet.
3. Allowing time for a gallery walk or showcase event is a great way to celebrate student work.
4. Provide access to the **Exit Ticket** as a final reflection on the project experience.





Launch Organizer



Brainstorm

What makes places in Canada special?
Write down your ideas. Think about:

- Nature (plants, animals, landscapes)
- People and communities
- History and culture
- Fun or interesting experiences



Ranking Ladder

Choose your **top 3** ideas from your brainstorm.
Rank them based on:

- How important is it to Canada's history and culture?
- How important is it for plants and animals?
- How well does it connect people across Canada?

1.

2.

3.

As you learn more about Parks Canada, you can come back and change your ideas or rankings.





Geographical Storytelling Organizer



Your Task

You will create a story about a place protected by Parks Canada.

Criteria for Success

Your story:

- Tells a story about a real Parks Canada place
- Clearly shows **what makes the place special**
- Is based on an event or experience that could really happen there (**believable**)
- Has a creative and unique title
- Introduces a main character
- Includes **at least 3 accurate geographical, cultural, or historical facts**
- Is **engaging** (interesting and keeps the reader's attention) and **informative** (teaches the reader something)
- Is clear and well organized
- Has at least 5 well-written and informative paragraphs: an introduction, one paragraph for each detail, and a conclusion
- Includes at least 3 relevant and helpful photographs or illustrations

Planning My Story

My Parks Canada place is: _____

What makes this place special? _____

The main event or experience in my story is: _____

My main character is: _____

Geographical Details

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Checklist

Before you finish, check your work:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ My story shows what makes the place special | ☐ I wrote 5 well-developed paragraphs |
| ☐ My story is believable | ☐ My writing is clear and organized |
| ☐ My story is engaging and informative | ☐ I added 3 relevant images or illustrations |
| ☐ I included at least 3 geographical facts | ☐ I checked my facts for accuracy |
| ☐ Checked for accuracy and interest? | |





Choosing a Site

What Happens There?

- What activities are described in the story?
- What other activities did you find in your research?
- Are any of these activities familiar to you?



Who is There?

- Who wrote the story about this place?
- Who is in the story?
- What other people or communities are connected to this place?



What Is This Place Like?

- Where is it in Canada? (province, region, or Treaty territory)
- What kind of place is it? (remote, rural, or urban)
- What is the landscape like? (mountains, forest, ocean, etc.)
- How is it similar to where you live?



Is this place special?

- Does this place match what you think makes a place special?
- Does it have the features you thought were important?

If not, you can:

- Change your ideas in the Launch Activity
- OR choose a different place



Making Your Final Choice

Choose the best place for your story by thinking about:

- Do I have enough information?
- What kind of story can I tell here?
- Who will my story be about?
(me, the author, or a new character)

Choosing Your Story Focus

Pick one main experience that:

- Makes sense for the place (it could really happen there)
- Is interesting to you
- Shows why the place is special





PROJECT FOCUS 1:

Mapping Your Place



Big Question

What are the most important features to include on a map of your Parks Canada place?

My Map Plan

Create your own map that shows **3 important geographical features** of your place.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Find Your Place

- Open the *Our Country Parks Canada Explorer Map*
- Search for the place you chose
- Use the zoom tool to show the area in the level of detail you want

2. Prepare Your Map

- Click **"Basic View"** to turn on the printable map layer
- Click **"Download this view"** to download your map as an image

3. Edit or Print

- Open your map on a computer OR print it out
- Add:
 - A title for your map
 - A legend (this explains your symbols)

4. Add Important Features

Label at least **3 important features** on your map.

These could include:

- Landforms (mountains, rivers, lakes)
- Important locations (buildings, landmarks, historic sites)
- Travel routes (trails, waterways, roads)
- Climate details (snow, rain, temperature patterns)

5. Create Your Legend

- Show what each symbol or colour means
- Make sure your legend matches what you added to the map

Checklist

- ☐ I included a clear title
- ☐ I created a legend
- ☐ I added at least 3 important features
- ☐ My features are neat and easy to understand
- ☐ My map connects to my story





PROJECT FOCUS 2:

Choosing Your Story Focus

Pick one main experience to build your story around.

Your experience should:

- Make sense for the place (it could really happen there)
- Be interesting to you
- Show why the place is special



At my place, these things can happen:

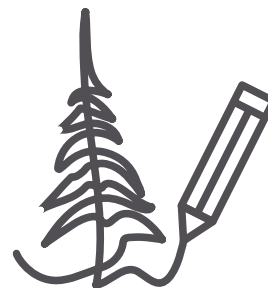
My story will feature this experience:





PROJECT FOCUS 3:

Descriptive Writing: Bringing Your Place to Life



Big Question

What details and descriptive words will help make your story clear, interesting, and realistic?

Your Task

Write a draft of your story using **sensory details**—what you might **see, hear, smell, taste, and feel** at your Parks Canada place.

Remember:

- Your details should be based on facts (from your research)
- Use your imagination, but keep it realistic and believable
- Keep track of where you found your information

What Would I See?

Think about colours, landscapes, animals, and people.

What Would I Hear?

Think about nature sounds, weather, or human activity.

What Would I Smell?

Think about plants, water, air, or food.

What Would I Feel?

Think about temperature, textures, or movement.

What Would I Taste?

Think about food or flavours connected to the place.

Checklist

- ☐ I used sensory details (see, hear, smell, feel, taste)
- ☐ My details are based on real facts
- ☐ My writing is clear and descriptive
- ☐ My story is believable
- ☐ I kept track of my sources





PROJECT FOCUS 4:

Including Indigenous Perspectives in Your Story



Big Question

How can you respectfully include Indigenous history and culture in your story?

Your Task

Learn about the Indigenous communities connected to your Parks Canada place and include their perspectives **in a respectful and meaningful way**.

1: Research

Find out:

- Which Indigenous communities are connected to your place?
- What is important about this place to these communities? (history, traditions, land, stories, or culture)

2: Think About Respect

When including Indigenous perspectives, remember:

- Use accurate information from your research
- Be respectful—these are real cultures and histories
- Do not make things up or guess
- Show why the place is important to the community

3: Plan Your Story

How will you include Indigenous perspectives in your story? (Check one or more)

- ☐ My story includes information about the Treaty or traditional territory connected to my place
- ☐ My story includes the Indigenous history and/or current connection to the land
- ☐ My story includes the Indigenous languages and place-names connected to the area I am writing about

My Plan

Write your idea: _____

Checklist

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ I used sensory details (see, hear, smell, feel, taste) | ☐ My story is believable |
| ☐ My details are based on real facts | ☐ I kept track of my sources |
| ☐ My writing is clear and descriptive | |





PROJECT FOCUS 5:

Geographical Story Draft Planner



Your Task

Use the chart below to draft your story.
You can add another page if you need more space.

Planning Chart

Use one row for each paragraph of your story.

Text	Images	Geographical Facts	Story Focus	Sources
<i>Draft the story section here. If you need more space, you can also recreate this chart on blank paper.</i>	<i>How will your visuals help your reader imagine the place?</i> • Show what the place looks like in different seasons or times of day • Help the reader picture the land, animals, and activities • Match the events in your story <i>You can:</i> • Draw your own illustrations • Use photographs (remember to record your sources!)	<i>Include at least one geographical fact per paragraph</i> <i>Facts can be about:</i> • Landforms (mountains, rivers, forests) • Climate (weather, seasons) • Plants and animals • History or communities (including Indigenous connections)	<i>Each paragraph should have a purpose. For example:</i> • Introduce a character • Describe the setting • Show a problem or challenge • Describe an experience • Show how the story ends • Add sensory details (what you see, hear, feel) to make it engaging!	<i>Include sources for all of your factual research and any photos that you choose to support your story.</i>

Checklist

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ I included sources for facts and images | ☐ My story is clear, organized, and engaging |
| ☐ I added at least one fact per paragraph | ☐ My ideas are believable and based on real information |
| ☐ My images help the reader imagine the place | |

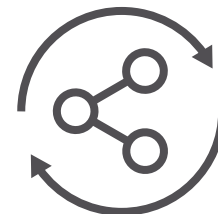




Revise and Share

Your Task

Work with a partner to review, improve, and publish your story.



1: Share

Exchange your story with a partner.

Give helpful feedback:

- What works well?
- What could be improved?

2: Review

1. Structure

- Is there a clear beginning, middle, and end?
- Is the title interesting?
- Is it easy to follow?

2. Content

- Are the facts accurate?
- Does it show what makes the place special?
- Are the details helpful and clear?

3. Editing

- Check spelling
- Check grammar

3: Revise

After feedback:

- Read your partner's comments
- Make changes to improve your story
- List what is left to finish:

4: Publish

Get your story ready to share!

- No spelling or grammar mistakes
- All sources are listed
- Images/illustrations are neat and attractive
- Final copy is organized

Ready to Share!

Your story is ready to be read by others.





Exit Ticket

1. Key Learning

What are the 3 most important facts or ideas you learned?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

2. Changes in Thinking

How did your thinking change?

- What ideas changed? _____

- What ideas stayed the same or were confirmed? _____

3. What Stood Out?

What stood out most to you — and why? _____

4. Still Wondering...

What is one question you still have about this place or about Canada? _____





What does respectful representation look like?

Respectful representation means ensuring that Indigenous peoples, cultures, histories, and knowledges are shared in ways that are accurate, meaningful, and grounded in relationship to land, community, and lived experience.

This involves moving beyond stereotypes or surface-level inclusion and centring Indigenous voices, local Nations, and place-based knowledge.

It means recognizing that the land itself holds stories, teachings, and responsibilities, and that educators play a role in presenting these respectfully, with care, and in ways that honour ongoing Indigenous presence and sovereignty.

Some key points to focus on respectful representation:

- **Center local Nations and place:**
Prioritize the histories, perspectives, and knowledge of the Indigenous peoples whose traditional territory your school and nearby parks are on.
- **Use authentic voices and sources:**
Draw from Indigenous created resources, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community partnerships rather than relying on generalized or outdated materials.
- **Avoid stereotypes and tokenism:**
Present Indigenous cultures as diverse, contemporary, and living, not as a single, historical narrative or cultural "add-on."
- **Teach relationships to land:**
Emphasize that land is not just a setting but a teacher, connecting language, culture, and identity, aligning with how many Indigenous world views understand place.

