

# CANADIAN GEOGRAPHIC IN THE CLASSROOM

Article 'Commemorate Canada - Viola Desmond'



## Time:

90 minutes

## Developed by:

Canadian Geographic Education

## Overview/focus question:

Who was Viola Desmond? What event sparked her legal fight in Nova Scotia? Why is the Roseland Theatre in New Glasgow, N.S., significant? What happened to the Roseland Theatre after Viola Desmond's experience? How can art make a difference in society?

## Subject/topic:

Geography, history, social studies

## Grade level:

Grades 7-10

## Learning Goals

Students will:

- Learn about Viola Desmond and her impact on Canada.
- Explore what happened in the Roseland Theatre and what happened to the theatre within the past 75 years.
- Discuss the misfortune in the Roseland Theatre's history.
- Learn about how renovations and art changed the way the building was viewed.
- Create artwork to represent Viola Desmond, the geography of the Roseland Theatre, and the issue of racial segregation.

## Materials Needed

- Online copies of the article "[75 years after Viola Desmond's stand against segregation, former theatre honours her legacy](#)" by Thomas Lundy
- A projector or a way to watch *Canadian Geographic's* [GeoMinute: Viola Desmond's courageous stand against racial segregation](#)
- Historica Canada's video [Heritage Minutes: Viola Desmond](#)
- Viola Desmond Artwork Research Worksheet (provided)

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- Access to electronic devices
- Art supplies

## Connection to the Canadian Geography Framework

### Concepts of Geographic Thinking

- Patterns and trends
- Interrelationships
- Geographic perspective

### Inquiry Process

- Ask geographic questions
- Interpret and analyze
- Communicate
- Evaluate and Draw Conclusions
- Reflect and respond

### Geospatial Skills

- N/A

## Lesson Description

### Minds on

This lesson will begin by watching the GeoMinute: Viola Desmond's courageous stand against racial segregation. Students will read the online article "75 years after Viola Desmond's stand against segregation, former theatre honours her legacy" by Thomas Lundy and have a class discussion about Viola Desmond.

### Action

Students will work independently or in a group to conduct research on Viola Desmond, New Glasgow's Roseland Theatre, and the state of racial segregation in the 1940s while filling out the brainstorming worksheet. Students will use their worksheet to turn their research into an art project to represent what they have learned.

### Conclusion

Students will title their art and write a short reflection on what their artwork represents. They will also make a poster that includes their artwork, title, and written description, which they will display around the class for a gallery walk.

## Lesson Implementation

### Minds on

Begin the lesson by showing your students the [GeoMinute: Viola Desmond's courageous stand against racial segregation](#). This video will provide students with a brief introduction to who Viola Desmond was and why she is an important figure in Canadian history. Next, show students Historica Canada's video [Heritage Minutes: Viola Desmond](#) to further their understanding of what happened on the evening of November 8, 1946. Ask students the following questions to start a class discussion:

- *How do you feel about the way Viola Desmond was treated that night?*

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- *What might have been going through her mind when they refused her service?*
- *Do you think something similar could happen in our current times?*
- *What has changed over the past 75 years?*

Allow time for students to read the online article “[75 years after Viola Desmond’s stand against segregation, former theatre honours her legacy](#)” by Thomas Lundy. Explain that the Roseland Theatre faced many hardships throughout the past 75 years. As a class, create a list of significant events that took place at the theatre. Discuss how different places can be more affected by negative events, such as having a higher crime rate, because of where they are located. Examples of geographical factors include:

- lower socioeconomic status
- less residential stability
- higher population densities
- land-use patterns

## Action

Now that students have been introduced to the topic of Viola Desmond and the Roseland Theatre, students are going to focus on how art saved the Roseland Theatre. Jamie MacGillivray saw the potential of honouring Viola Desmond through an art contest, and now your students will create an art project as well.

Students will work independently or in a group to conduct research on Viola Desmond, New Glasgow’s Roseland Theatre, and the state of racial segregation in the 1940s. Provide students with the attached Viola Desmond Artwork Research Worksheet to help them organize their thoughts and ideas. Next, explain that students will be using their worksheet to turn their research into an art project that reflects what they have learned. Example art projects could include posters, paintings, infographics, or photo essays.

## Conclusion and Consolidation

Remind students that after they have completed their artwork, they must give their art a title that represents the key message they mean to convey. They must also write a short reflection (one paragraph) on what their artwork represents. Afterwards, have students display their work around the classroom and have a gallery walk where students can view and discuss each other’s artwork.

Finish the lesson by having a class discussion about what students have learned through their research and artwork. Ask students the following wrap-up questions:

- *What has changed in regards to racial segregation in the past 75 years?*
- *What was the importance of Viola Desmond being featured on the Canadian \$10 bill?*
- *How can art have an impact on social justice?*

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## Extend your geographical thinking

- Showcase your students' artwork throughout the school for a larger impact.
- Have a school or community art contest.
- Have students research a social justice issue about which they can create artwork or a poster to share information.
- Students can write a reflective essay on the topic.

## Modifications

- Students can create a multimedia presentation rather than an art project.
- Students can complete this project individually or in groups.
- Students can individually present their projects to the class rather than having a gallery walk.
- Students can answer the final questions as a written assignment.

## Assessment Opportunities

- Assess students' learning based on their participation in discussion throughout the lesson.
- Assess students' research worksheet.
- Students' essays can be self- and peer-assessed.
- Students can hand in their art and reflection for formal assessment.
- Use the conclusion questions as an exit slip and assess their learning.

## Sources and Additional resources

- [The Canadian Encyclopedia: Viola Desmond](#)
- [75 years after Viola Desmond's stand against segregation, former theatre honours her legacy](#)
- [GeoMinute: Viola Desmond's courageous stand against racial segregation](#)
- [Heritage Minutes: Viola Desmond](#)



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## VIOLA DESMOND ARTWORK RESEARCH WORKSHEET



Artwork brainstorm