



# Commemorate Canada - The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

## Overview:

The purpose of this activity is to provide students with an opportunity to think critically about the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. After completing this activity, students will be able to answer the following questions:

- In 1982, which historic event showcased Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms?
- What is the purpose of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms?
- What is the significance of Section 35 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

## Time:

75 mins (can be divided)

## Subject/topic:

History, Geography, Social studies, Law

## Grade:

10-12

## Materials:

- *Canadian Geographic* article [40th anniversary: The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#) by Mark Bourrie
- *Canadian Geographic's* GeoMinute: [The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)
- A projector, SMART board, or other way of sharing the article and GeoMinute
- Electronic devices with internet access for student research and writing
- The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms student worksheet
- Paper
- Writing utensils

## Lesson Description

### Minds on:

Students will brainstorm a list of Canadian basic rights and freedoms and research key aspects of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

### Action:

Students will learn about the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, concentrating on Section 35, which covers Indigenous rights. Students will complete a worksheet to reflect on the inequalities facing Indigenous communities and the Charter's connection to these inequalities.

### Conclusion:

Students will reflect on rights and freedoms in Canada.

## Lesson Implementation

### Minds on

Begin the lesson by asking students to share aloud what they consider their basic rights and freedoms as residents of Canada. Note students' answers on the board.

Explain to students that any person in Canada, whether they maintain the status of Canadian citizen, permanent resident, or immigrant, has rights and freedoms. Those rights and freedoms are laid out in the Constitution Act, the most supreme law in Canada which outlines basic information about how our country operates, and more specifically, in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is one part of the Constitution Act that specifically addresses the political and civil rights of everyone in Canada.

Inform students that 1982 was a particularly special year in the history of Canada as that is when the Charter was officially enacted.

Play the GeoMinute: [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)

As a class, identify keywords and key concepts included in the GeoMinute. The list should include the following:

- Canada's patriated constitution
- The Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Part I of the Constitution Act
- Discrimination
- Section 35
- Aboriginal and treaty rights
- Provincial premiers

Break students into small groups and assign a keyword from the list above to each group. Ask each group to research their assigned keyword and create a bullet list of five pieces of information about it.



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## Learning goals

- Acquire foundational knowledge about the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- Differentiate between the Constitution Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- Describe the significance of Section 35 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

## Connection to the Canadian Geography Framework:

### Concepts of Geographic Thinking

- Interrelationships
- Geographic perspective

### Inquiry Process

- Interpret and analyze
- Communicate
- Reflect and respond
- Evaluate and draw conclusions

### Geospatial Skills

N/A

Lead a class discussion in which students share what they learned. Ensure all students have a fundamental understanding of the importance of and relationship between the keywords and key concepts that were studied.

### Action

Explain to students that April 2022 marked the 40th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In celebration of this milestone, *Canadian Geographic* commissioned author Mark Bourrie to write a piece about the Charter goals and how they relate to the Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

As a class, individually or in groups, have students read the article **40th anniversary: The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms** by Mark Bourrie. Invite initial feedback from students after they have finished reading the article.

Explain to students that, while any person in Canada has inherent rights and freedoms outlined in the Charter, there are some official sections of the Charter that apply only to specific groups of people. For example, the Charter assigns only Canadian citizens the right to vote (Section 3) and the right to travel without restriction (Section 6).

With respect to Indigenous Peoples in Canada, Section 35 is of particular importance. The signing of the new Canadian Constitution into law in April 1982 “enshrined Indigenous rights for the first time.” The Charter did not put Indigenous rights protection in [Part 1] of the Constitution. Instead, Indigenous rights are guaranteed by Section 35 of the Constitution.

This means that Indigenous rights (called Aboriginal rights in the Charter) are vulnerable in comparison to the rights of non-Indigenous peoples listed in Part 1 of the Constitution because the government can actually circumvent some Indigenous rights in situations where society’s rights must be balanced against those of the individual. For example, cases of economic development and urban expansion that affect the traditional lands of Indigenous communities.

Pause here and divide students into groups to fill out the Charter of Rights and Freedoms student worksheet using an electronic device with internet access for research.

### Conclusion and Consolidation

End the lesson by having your students complete an individual exit ticket answering the following question: Did today’s activity change your perspective about rights and freedoms in Canada?



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## Extend your geographical thinking

- Have your students take a look at the [Mapping Democracy](#) tiled map to understand the different levels and branches of government.
- Students can research the history of Parliament of Canada and how laws came into place from the beginning of Canada's history, as well as the history of the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom](#).
- Have your students read the [Rights of Aboriginal Peoples of Canada](#) and explore deeper how Canada does or does not support the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

## Modifications

- Students can do the worksheet individually, in small groups, or as a class.
- Worksheet questions can be adapted based on student needs.
- **Extensions:** Students can research the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and compare these rights to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

## Assessment Opportunities

Students can be assessed on their:

- Participation in discussion throughout the lesson
- Charter of Rights and Freedoms worksheet
- Exit ticket

## Sources and additional resources

- [Canadian Geographic](#) article 40th anniversary: The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms by Mark Bourrie
- [Canadian Geographic](#) GeoMinute The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- [Centre for Constitutional Studies: Oakes Test](#)
- [Canadian Geographic Education's tiled map: Mapping Democracy](#)
- [Learn about the Charter](#)
- [The Constitution Acts, 1867-1982](#)

# The Charter of Rights and Freedoms Student Worksheet

Student name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

The Charter dictates that everyone, regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability, is equal before the law.

To explore this further, spend some time reading through the information on these websites:

- [Rights and freedoms in Canada](#)
- [Guide to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)
- [Section 35 of the Constitution Act](#)

Reflect on each of the following prompts and write a response:

1. Why are provincial powers able to infringe upon Indigenous rights but no infringement is allowed on provincial property and civil rights?

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2. Indigenous communities are currently faced with economic, health, and social inequities. How can the Charter be used to help reduce these inequities?

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