
External Forces on Canadian Confederation P.B.L.

History 30

Summary:

Through Problem based learning the students will take the perspective of a fictional character from the mid 1800's to gain a perspective on the external forces that pushed Canada towards Confederation. The students will be given disclosures that guide them to further enquiry regarding topics like the **U.S. manifest destiny**, the **British Corn Laws**, the **Treaty of Reciprocity**, the **U.S. Civil War**, and the **Fenian raids** into Canada. Through this enquiry process, the students will be challenged to use the historical thinking concepts of: historical significance, continuity and change, cause and consequence, and historical perspective. Once the students have completed their research around all of the disclosures they will then need to write a speech that outlines what they believe to be the best course of action for the elected assembly of Canada to take, considering all of the external pressures that are on the British colonies of North America at this point in history. The students are required to be creative in their speech as they do not have any information in the disclosures that tells the students that these events would contribute to Canada's Confederation in 1867.

Reflection:

This project was a lot of fun and the students were engaged in some really good group discussion for every disclosure. I found that it was good not to give the students too much time for each disclosure as they would get too far away from the focus towards Canada. I put all of the students into partners for each disclosure, which worked well for collaboration through their enquiry but I had each student write their own speech. When completing this project it will be important for the teacher to have a fairly good understanding of these events as you may need to direct the students if they are finding some inaccurate information online and some of the fictional information in the disclosures is a little stretched to make the story fit with the chronology of the real events.

Timeline:

Students were given 5 class periods (to complete this entire project).

Student Handouts:

I have included the initial problem statement for this P.B.L. along with the three disclosures that I gave to this students. The last student handout was just a research guide that I gave the students to help them keep track of information that they discovers in their research.

History 30

Unit 2 P.B.L.

Meet the Problem:

You are the foreign affairs advisor to the Honorable George Brown of the elected assembly of Canada. You have the influential role of evaluating events that are happening all around the world and providing recommendations to the best course of action for the colony of Canada. Currently, the Canadian legislative assembly has requested that you investigate several issues that are taking place around the world and prepare a formal speech, which you will deliver to the assembly. Your speech must give a concise summary of the issues going on in the world, explain the possible implications that all situations could have on Canada, and give a recommended course of action for the colony based on your understanding of the events. Good luck with this task; Mr. Brown can be known to be a very demanding boss at times.

Disclosure 1:

1845 has been a memorable and busy year for you with all of the major changes and events that are happening around the world, more specifically in Texas. That reminds you, that you still need to read that report written by John O' Sullivan, it has been sitting on your desk for over a month now. These days it is harder to tell who President James Polk keeps busier: you or Governor Douglas over on the West coast. Though I'm sure that neither you nor Douglas would want to trade places with your counterparts down in Mexico right now. But enough of this complaining about the Americans. They just might be part of your solution to the impending economic crisis that Canada could be facing if the Anti-Corn Laws League gets their way in Britain. It feels like the day has passed in the blink of an eye, what will you tell Mr. Brown tomorrow when he asks for an update during your scheduled breakfast meeting?

Disclosure 2:

Well I guess the honorable Mr. Brown was exaggerating when he said he would never seek your advice ever again; after that scrambled report that you gave him over breakfast so many years ago. Guess it must be that Scottish temper of his that got the best of him. I've heard that John A. can be far worse, especially when he isn't happy with the drink that he is served. Never mind though. It's a good thing that everything turned out with the Americans and the Treaty of Reciprocity. To think it's almost been fifteen years now that you've been living down in the U.S. As your train works its way north, you realize how much you've missed Canada. Though work is work and you've gained so much great experience being in the U.S. over the past couple of years; let alone all that you've learnt working with Lincoln in the opening months of the war. You are definitely happy to be home. It hasn't been a particularly nice time to be known as the Brit in Washington, ever since that whole Trent affair. You were wondering if you might have to head even farther south if things had gotten any tenser. You have no doubt in your mind that this is the whole reason that George Brown has offered you your old job back; these events in the U.S. will undoubtedly have an impact on Canada. It only makes sense that the elected assembly would want your perspective and counsel to guide Canadian policies towards the U.S. while the war goes on. Now there is still a few hours left on the train. You better get your report finished up regarding the tensions over the Trent affair and the potential economic impacts the war in the U.S. could have on Canadian exports.

Disclosure 3:

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Funny, you thought your job would become a lot easier after the Civil War in the U.S. had ended, but that has not been the case at all. If anything, you had less to report to Canada about when the U.S. was focused on their internal issues. Now, with the cancelation of the Treaty of Reciprocity (boy I'll have to take my time saying that in this speech), the Canadian legislative assembly is concerned about the viability of the economy of the colony. You can't help but think of how familiar this is all feeling as you read through John O' Sullivan's report once again and try to see if you can find a solution for a potential economic crisis. That phrasing he uses, "Manifest Destiny", it has such a familiar tone to it now; it's funny that you never picked up on it before. As if the economy isn't enough to worry about, you're also going to have someone look into those two Irishman: John O'Mahony and Michael Doheny. They have written a catching jingle but the words are not sitting well with too many people up here:

"We are the Fenian Brotherhood, skilled in the arts of war and we're going to fight for Ireland, the land that we adore. Many battles have we won, along with the boys in blue, and we'll go and capture Canada, for we've nothing else to do."

You can't help but feel as if you are caught in between a rock and a hard place on this one, the fight isn't so much with Canada, as much as it is just more on Canadian soil. Britain has definitely made some enemies over the years and as a colony, you are just along for the ride. What to do? What to do? You are both excited and nervous to be addressing the elected assembly next week. It was a nice boost in confidence that Mr. Brown asked that you present your ideas to the elected assembly and not just to him this time. However, he was very clear that he wanted you to go beyond just summarizing the key information from the events. You are to give a clear recommendation on what actions you think Canada should take for the best future possible. Easy for him to say; he makes speeches every day. All things considered though, what is the best course of action for Canada?

History 30 Unit 2 P.B.L.

Information pulled from the disclosure	Topics I need to research/Questions I have	Key information that I have found	Conclusion and recommendations that I have come up with

Student Exemplar

I have included a sample of one of the speeches that a student submitted for this project.

Speech to Canada

Welcome everyone from the elected assembly and guests. Gentlemen...it has been an interesting few years. Our economy has both fallen and strived. Our brother to the south, America, has been going through massive changes and our father, Great Britain, has been a part of it all. We each have affected each other through our actions and the time has come now to reflect on what has happened and determine what should be done for the future of our home.

The United States has, undoubtedly, transformed dramatically in the last decade. After their revolution to separate from Britain, it hasn't all been pretty, but it has not been that bad either! They gained several valuable regions in Texas as well as parts of Mexico along with a lot of land on the West Coast. True, there was some fighting and conflict with Mexico, but look at how much they gained! During that time as well, we made the Treaty of Reciprocity with them, which allowed for free trade between our two growing nations. The trade benefitted us greatly in 1961 when America experienced a civil war between their North and South. They needed war goods, and since trading with Britain was not an option, they looked to us. Our economy boomed!

Britain remained neutral, and after the Trent Affair, in which occurred when an American ship intersected a neutral British ship carrying southern confederates. The two were arrested, which caused Britain uproar since they were on a neutral ship and as thus, broke international law by arresting them. They began to prepare for war, and luckily Lincoln avoided it. After spending many years down in the states, it has been made clear to me how successful they are under their own control rather than the Britain's. I believe that an alliance with America would be highly valuable, however I question if it will be as beneficial if we still answer to Britain. It has become very clear to many that Britain is slowly faltering.

During the time of the Anti-Corn Laws, it was made clear that we could not depend on Britain economically due to their poor decisions and unstable economy. Earlier this year as well, we witnessed the Fenian Raids, an event where our land was held hostage because of the British-Irish conflicts occurring in Europe. We were caught by surprise, and were extremely vulnerable

But during all this, we still thrived. We did what we could, and through the Fenian threats, our province of Canada was unified and our militia grew. Britain did not wish to help us, so we helped ourselves. We also made a treaty, and we traded with America so that our home could grow. Unfortunately, that treaty was ended only a couple months ago. Now, it is time to make a decision. Do we remain loyal to Britain? Or do we follow the United States' lead and leave? What will be our destiny?

I say, that for the benefit of Canada, we separate from Britain, but we do it peacefully. War can be avoided, and I believe a split will allow our economy and country to grow. We will be able to trade with the United States and other countries as we see fit, and we will no longer become involved in and be affected by Britain's actions. By separating peacefully, our economy will boom through trade, and perhaps even a railway and more infrastructure could be built. Like a young bird, it is our turn to step out of our parents nest and soar to be the great country I know we can be. It may take time, but even Rome was not built in a day! In the long run, I believe a peaceful confederation will be the best course of action for Canada.