

WHAT ^{IN THE} WORLD?



LEVEL 2 (GRADES 8 AND UP)

Alberta Independence Vote

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2026/2027: ISSUE 2

WHAT IN THE WORLD?

Level 2, 2026/2027: Issue 2

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HAY'SXW'QA!

LesPlan is grateful to the Lkwungen Peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, on whose unceded land we now live, and do our work.

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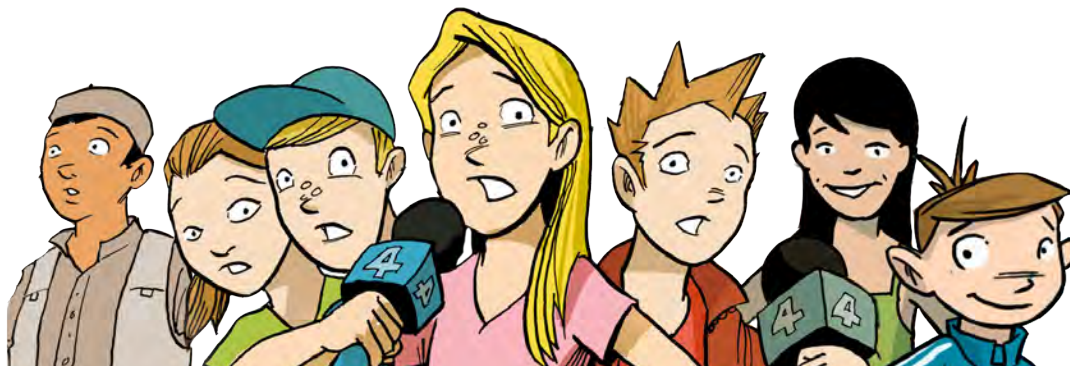
I have had many parents comment to me about how great they think *What in the World?* is, and they look forward to each month's issue coming home... This is a great resource for a small country school to explore the global issues that affect us all.

K. Camelon, Grade 7/8 teacher

Admaston, ON

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WHAT YOU'RE MISSING



NATIONAL

A TRADE DISPUTE BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS



Trade barriers between Canada and the United States have been coming down for decades. Now, however, an escalating war of words is erecting them again—big time. The dispute is just the latest chapter in an ongoing tariff saga that began soon after U.S. President Donald . . .

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INTERNATIONAL

A CIVIL WAR IN YEMEN HEATS UP



The world is currently focused on an ongoing civil war in the Middle East. The new fighting in Yemen, located on the Arabian Peninsula, is expanding beyond that nation's borders with far-reaching global consequences. The recent military escalation is the latest round in a conflict . . .

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SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

HEADS UP ON BRAIN HEALTH



Electric scooters, also known as e-scooters, seem to be everywhere these days. It's no wonder. The zippy two-wheelers are fun, fairly affordable, and give young people and adults alike a convenient way to get around. But are they safe? It's a question many are asking as more and more . . .

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NATIONAL

ALBERTA PUTS CANADA TO THE TEST

– A PETITION ASKS THE QUESTION: SHOULD THE PROVINCE SEPARATE?

BEFORE READING

1. Write the word 'Alberta' on the board.
2. In small groups, have students share ideas about the following question words as they relate to Alberta:

Where?

(e.g., Western Canada; east of B.C.; west of Saskatchewan; south of Northwest Territories; shares a border with the U.S.; part of its border is formed by the Rocky Mountains; cities include Edmonton, Calgary, Banff, Fort McMurray; etc.)

Who?

(e.g., Alberta Premier Danielle Smith; opposition leader Pierre Poilievre; Michael J. Fox; Mark Messier; Tate McRae; Edmonton Oilers/Elks; Calgary Flames/Stampeders; etc.)

What?

(Oil production; forestry; tourism; ranching; farming; etc.)

3. Debrief as a class, jotting down ideas under those three headings on the board.
4. Have students watch either or both of these brief summaries of the question of Alberta separatism:

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/video/9.7136437> [2:54]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cq7zd4rlo4A> [2:12]

5. Finally, invite students to set a purpose for reading the article, perhaps using the question they just discussed with their partner, referring to the resource page **Setting A Purpose Before Reading** as needed.



Alberta



Canada



NATIONAL

ALBERTA PUTS CANADA TO THE TEST

— A PETITION ASKS THE QUESTION: SHOULD THE PROVINCE SEPARATE?



On October 19, a **referendum** will ask Albertans to decide whether they should remain part of Canada or begin the process of leaving. That decision could dramatically reshape the nation.

Even if voters favour independence, this won't make them citizens of a new country. But a win would start the process, and separation could occur in the future.

The October ballot marks a major turning point in a **separatist** drive that has grown rapidly over the past year. Powering the movement is a long-standing belief among some Albertans that Ottawa doesn't respect the province, its conservative values, or the oil-and-gas industry that forms the basis of its economy.

A SUCCESSFUL PETITION

The current push to separate began on January 3 with a citizen-led **petition** fronted by the group Stay Free Alberta and its leader, Mitch Sylvestre. Organizers asked residents to support this question: *'Do you agree that the Province of Alberta should cease to be a part of Canada to become an independent state?'*

When signature collection ended on May 2, canvassers had gathered 286,593 names—over nine percent of the province's eligible voters. Elections Alberta later determined that 222,597 signatures met the legal test—well above the 177,732 needed for a petition to be valid under Alberta law.

A CHALLENGE IS BYPASSED

That outcome led to a major court battle. In May, Justice Shaina Leonard of the Alberta Court of King's Bench cancelled Election Alberta's approval of the petition. She ruled that the province had failed to consult First Nations, whose treaty rights may be severely affected by separation.

That decision is under appeal. But rather than wait for a ruling, Premier Danielle Smith's United Conservative Party (UCP) government added a similar question to a October 19 referendum vote. Its exact wording: *'Should Alberta remain a province of Canada, or should the Government of Alberta commence the legal process required under the Canadian Constitution to hold a binding provincial referendum on whether or not Alberta should separate from Canada?'*

ALBERTA SNAPSHOT

Alberta, Canada's fourth-largest province, has a total area of 661,848 sq km. It's known for its stunning Rocky Mountains, vast prairies, parks, tourism, and high quality of life.

Alberta joined Confederation in 1905. Key economic hubs are the capital, Edmonton, and the largest city, Calgary. The current population is 5,057,000, a 14 percent increase since 2021.

Huge oil reserves account for Alberta's robust economy, earning it the moniker Canada's 'energy province.' The two largest industries by revenue are oil drilling and gas extraction (\$113 billion) and gasoline and petroleum wholesaling (\$73 billion). Alberta's total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is \$373 billion.

(The referendum also poses nine other unrelated questions.)

'WESTERN ALIENATION'

This separation movement didn't just appear out of the blue. In fact, political and economic friction between parts of Western Canada and Ottawa has festered for decades. This independence

DEFINITIONS

PETITION: a document signed by many people that asks somebody in authority to do or change something

REFERENDUM: an occasion when all the people in a jurisdiction can vote on an important issue

SEPARATISM: the desire by people within a country or territory to separate and form their own government

drive, propelled mainly by economic and political concerns, has a central concept called “Western alienation.” The term captures the idea that the West feels overlooked or treated unfairly by a central government dominated by Ontario and Quebec.

So what are the roots of Western alienation? Many believe it started in 1980 when the Liberal government of the day introduced the National Energy Program (NEP). The policy placed price controls and taxes on Alberta’s oil industry to increase Canadian ownership of energy resources and to protect consumers from high global oil prices.

However, to many Albertans, it felt like Ottawa was reaching into their pockets and transferring wealth to other parts of Canada. The policy caused economic hardship in the province and left a lasting bitterness.

WHY SEPARATISM SURGED

Energy and environmental policy poured fuel on the fire during former Liberal prime minister Justin Trudeau’s decade in office. Three proposed pipelines meant to carry Alberta oil to new markets were cancelled. And expansion of the Trans Mountain Pipeline was delayed for years before finally opening in 2024.

Federal **carbon pricing**, environmental assessment rules, a tanker ban on B.C.’s north coast, and proposed oil-and-gas emissions caps were also seen as problematic. Political differences deepened the divide because most Albertans usually vote Conservative.

The COVID pandemic added to tensions after truckers and their supporters—many from the West—drove to Ottawa in January 2022. For three weeks, this ‘Freedom Convoy’ noisily protested federal COVID rules. Ottawa invoked the Emergencies Act,

giving police extra powers to restore order—a show of authority many Albertans disliked.

Some analysts also cite the influence of U.S.-based **populist** movements, which distrust centralized governments. These ideas have spread through social media and political networks, shaping debates in Canada as well.

Then, in 2025, the UPC made citizen initiatives easier. Bill 54 reduced the number of signatures needed for a constitutional petition and lengthened the collection period from 90 to 120 days. That change opened the door for the successful separatist petition.

THE MOOD IN ALBERTA

However, the anti-Ottawa mood has softened since Liberal Mark Carney became prime minister in April 2025. In May 2026, Ottawa and Alberta signed a deal meant to expand energy production and exports while lowering emissions. It includes a planned new pipeline to carry Alberta oil to the Pacific Ocean near Vancouver, stronger carbon pricing, and support for a carbon-capture project. Ottawa also won’t proceed with a previously proposed oil-and-gas emissions cap.

Ms. Smith said she wants Alberta to remain in Canada. But Mr. Carney warned that just putting separation on a ballot is a “dangerous bluff.” He compared it to Britain’s **Brexit** vote, which had a significant negative economic impact on the UK economy.

Meanwhile, an August Research Co. poll found that 74 percent of likely Alberta voters planned to choose the option to remain, while 22 percent favoured beginning the process of separation. Other polls also point to a clear majority against moving ahead. Support for separation is stronger among rural residents and UCP voters

than among urban residents and supporters of other parties.

THE CHOICE AHEAD

On October 19, if Albertans favour a future referendum, the province would still have a constitutional duty to consult First Nations beforehand. And even if that later vote was for separation, Alberta could not simply declare independence.

Under the federal Clarity Act, the House of Commons would decide if the referendum question was clear and whether the majority was large enough to justify negotiations. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that a clear vote in favour would create a duty to negotiate, not an automatic right to leave. Those talks would involve Ottawa, Alberta, other provinces, and Indigenous Peoples. It would also require a constitutional amendment.

The practical challenges would be huge. Alberta is landlocked, so it would need Canada or the U.S. to agree to move its goods to tidewater. It would have to settle its share of federal assets and debt. Currency, pensions, citizenship, defence, and federal programs would need to be created. Pacts like the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) and defence treaties with the U.S. would have to be renegotiated.

Treaty rights may be the toughest issue of all. First Nations leaders argue that their agreements are with Canada, not with a future sovereign Alberta. Some have said their territories can’t leave Canada without their consent.

Whatever the outcome on October 19, the debate is forcing Canadians to confront an old question. How can a vast and diverse country ensure that everyone feels heard while preserving the ties that hold it together? For now, we’ll keep searching for the answer. ★

DEFINITIONS

BREXIT: The UK’s withdrawal from the European Union after a 2016 referendum. The term combines “Britain” and “exit.”

CARBON PRICING: a policy that puts a cost on greenhouse gas emissions to encourage people and businesses to pollute less

POPULISM: a type of politics that claims to represent the opinions and wishes of ordinary people



NATIONAL

ALBERTA PUTS CANADA TO THE TEST

– A PETITION ASKS THE QUESTION: SHOULD THE PROVINCE SEPARATE?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. When did Alberta join Canada?

2. List at least four other important facts about Alberta.

3. Explain what “**Western alienation**” means.

4. What happened in the 1980s that increased hostile feelings against the federal government? Explain.

5. Describe what happened in recent years when Justin Trudeau was the prime minister? .

6. Who is the leader of the Stay Free Alberta organization?

7. What did this group want the Alberta government to do?

8. What did Elections Alberta decide about this petition? What ruling did Justice Shaina Leonard make about this petition?

9. How did the government respond to the legal ruling?



ALBERTA PUTS CANADA TO THE TEST

– A PETITION ASKS THE QUESTION: SHOULD THE PROVINCE SEPARATE?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

1. If the majority of Albertans vote that Alberta should remain a province of Canada, how do you think this will affect the future relationship between those voters and Albertans who support separatism? How do you think this process will affect the future relationship between Alberta and other Canadian provinces and territories? Give reasons to support your response.

2. The article states: “Ms. Smith said she wants Alberta to remain in Canada. But Mr. Carney warned that just putting separation on a ballot is a ‘dangerous bluff.’” As you see it, what does Mr. Carney mean by this statement? Give reasons to support your ideas.

3. Speaking from your personal perspective, and your location in Canada, how might you be affected if Alberta took the decision to separate from Canada? Give examples to support your ideas.



NATIONAL

ALBERTA PUTS CANADA TO THE TEST

– A PETITION ASKS THE QUESTION: SHOULD THE PROVINCE SEPARATE?

QUESTIONS FOR ONLINE EXPLORATION

Note: The links below are listed at www.lesplan.com/links for easy access.

1. Learn about the process necessary for Alberta to separate from Canada:

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/video/9.7136155> [13:44]

2. Learn about a new report that predicts the cost for Alberta to separate from Canada:

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/edmonton/article/separation-could-cost-alberta-up-to-170b-independent-report/> [2:53]

What are your impressions of the data in this report?

3. Listen to Alberta Premier Danielle Smith explain why the referendum question related to separation has been reworded and her own position on Alberta separation:

<https://albertareferendum2026.ca/separation-question/> [15:00]

What questions do you have?

4. Learn how the referendum question is impacting Albertans:

<https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=kudofSpVc34> [3:00]

<https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=pjtJQqkgfTs> [5:10]

5. Learn more about the questions and concerns of stakeholders that may be impacted by this issue:

Alberta separatists

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/alberta-referendum-separatist-leaders-9.7349718> [1:57]

Alberta federalists

<https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=SIWf9I6AIWI> [1:52]

Alberta First Nations

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/treaty-6-150-and-alberta-separation-9.7341830> [2:04]

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/_PY2an-HinQ [1:58]

Prime Minister Carney

<https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=w6KVBt7hxPs> [3:15]



NATIONAL

ALBERTA PUTS CANADA TO THE TEST

– A PETITION ASKS THE QUESTION: SHOULD THE PROVINCE SEPARATE?

Imagine that you are an investigative reporter interviewing the central figure in this scene. Generate two powerful questions to ask in your interview. (*A powerful question is not easy to answer, is specific to the situation, is open-ended and requires further research.*) Then, record plausible answers—those that are most likely to be given, believable, and supported by evidence in the image.



Chief Sheldon Sunshine speaks as First Nations chiefs, band councillors and elders gather to call on Premier Danielle Smith's government to stomp out the push for the province to leave Canada, at the Alberta legislature in Edmonton on Monday March 9, 2026. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Jason Franson



NATIONAL

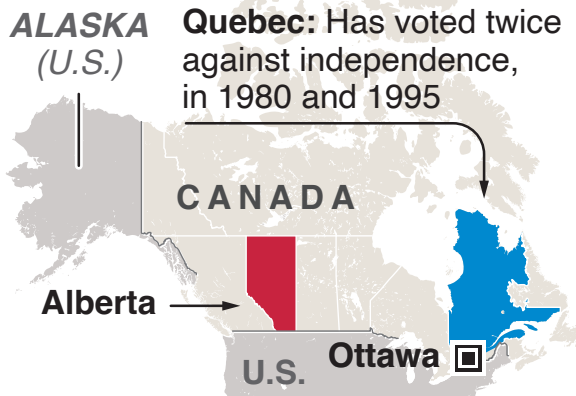
ALBERTA PUTS CANADA TO THE TEST

– A PETITION ASKS THE QUESTION: SHOULD THE PROVINCE SEPARATE?

INFOGRAPHIC

Alberta to vote on remaining in Canada

Alberta will hold a referendum on whether the oil-rich province should remain in Canada or pursue a binding independence vote, marking the country's most significant test of unity in decades



Alberta's Premier **Danielle Smith** and Prime Minister **Mark Carney**

■ Growing independence movement fuelled by anger over natural resource policy, with some Albertans blaming federal government for hindering province's oil and gas industry in favour of pro-climate legislation



Alberta

Canada
Including
Alberta



Area:	661,848 sq. km
Population:	4.9 million (2024)
GDP:	\$452bn (2023)
Exports to U.S.:	\$162.1bn (2024)

Sources: Canada Government, IMF, EIA, Reuters

Area:	9,984,670 sq. km
Population:	41 million (2026)
GDP:	\$2.42 trillion (2026)
Exports to U.S.:	\$547.4 billion (2024)

Pictures: Getty Images

© GRAPHIC NEWS

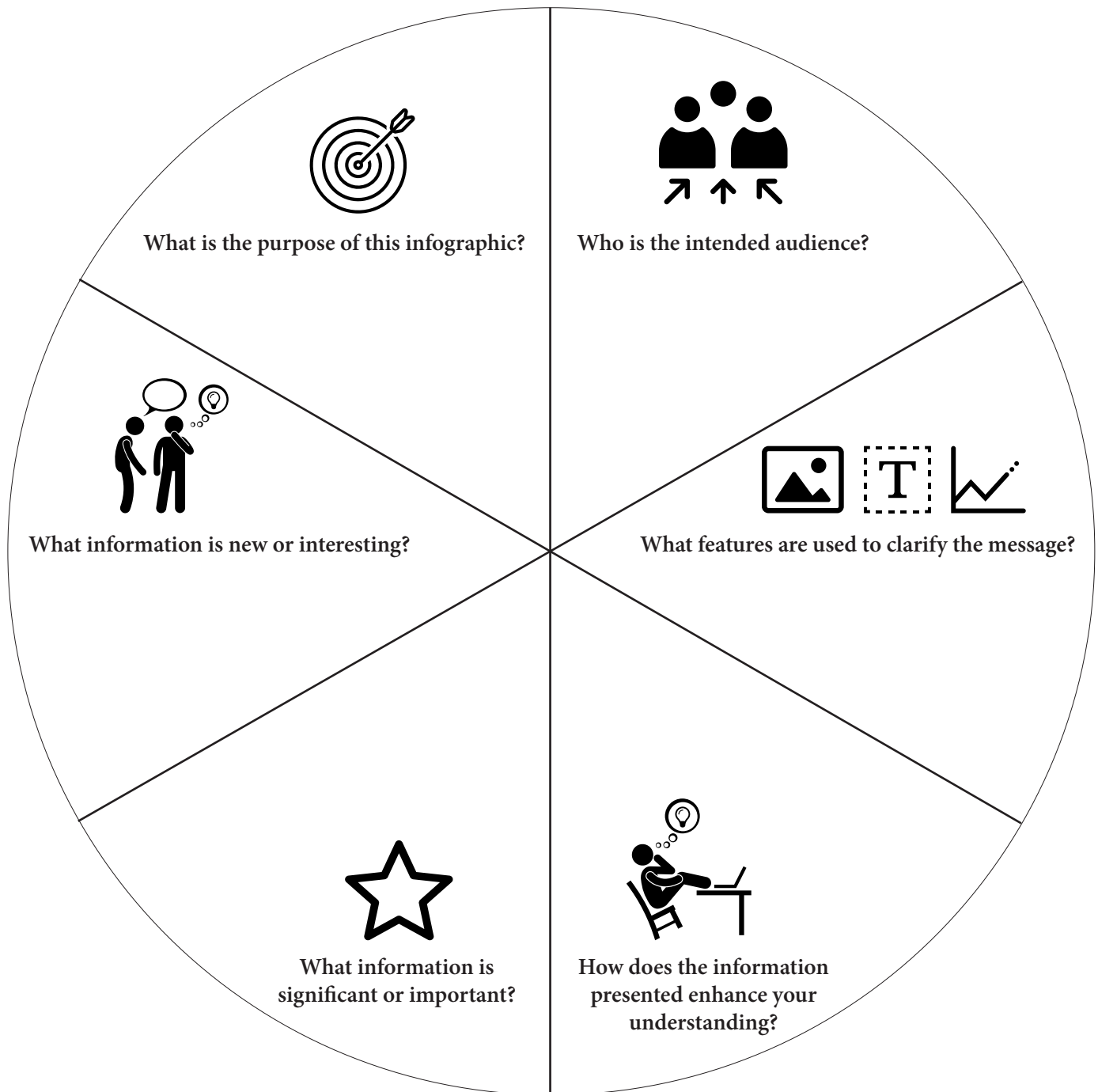


NATIONAL

ALBERTA PUTS CANADA TO THE TEST

– A PETITION ASKS THE QUESTION: SHOULD THE PROVINCE SEPARATE?

ANALYZING AN INFOGRAPHIC



What questions do you still have about the topic presented?

Complete this map assignment to better understand the article *Alberta Puts Canada to the Test*.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Obtain the required resources and read all the instructions before starting.
2. Colour your map after all labelling is completed.
3. Print in pencil only first, then go over the printing in black ink.
4. Work carefully and neatly.

Resources Required: pencil, black pen, pencil crayons, ruler, eraser and an atlas.

Part A Locate and label Alberta in CAPITAL letters and shade this province yellow.

Part B Locate and label the capital of Alberta and underline this city name.

Part C Locate and label the following provinces, territory, and U.S. states in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:

British Columbia (pink)	Saskatchewan (green)
Northwest Territories (purple)	Washington (orange)
Idaho (red)	Montana (brown)

Part D Locate and label the following Alberta cities:

Calgary	Red Deer
Lethbridge	Airdrie
St. Albert	Fort McMurray
Grande Prairie	Medicine Hat

Part E Locate and label the following cities in B.C. and Saskatchewan:

Kelowna	Kamloops
Cranbrook	Dawson Creek
North Battleford	Swift Current

Part F Locate and label the following and shade all fresh water light blue:

Lesser Slave Lake	Lake Athabasca
-------------------	----------------

Part G Draw and label the following rivers and shade all fresh water light blue:

Athabasca River	Peace River
Slave River	South Saskatchewan River
North Saskatchewan River	Bow River
Red Deer River	Fraser River
Columbia River	

Part H Locate and label the following lines of latitude:

49° N	60° N
-------	-------

Part I Complete your map with a frame, title and compass. ★



Alberta



MAP ASSIGNMENT CANADA WEST

Complete this map assignment to better understand the article *Alberta Puts Canada to the Test*.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Obtain the required resources and read all the instructions before starting.
2. Colour your map **after** all labelling is completed.
3. Print in pencil only first, then go over the printing in black ink.
4. Work carefully and neatly.

Resources Required: pencil, black pen, pencil crayons, ruler, eraser and an atlas.

Part A Locate and label the following provinces in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:

British Columbia (pink)	Alberta (yellow)
Saskatchewan (green)	Manitoba (red)

Part B Locate and label the capital of each province above and underline each city name.

Part C Locate and label the following cities:

Vancouver	Calgary
Saskatoon	Brandon

Part D Locate and label the following territories and province in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:

Yukon (brown)	Northwest Territories (purple)
Nunavut (yellow)	Ontario (orange)

Part E Locate and label all U.S. territory grey.

Part F Draw and label the following rivers and shade them light blue:

MacKenzie River	Slave River
Peace River	Athabasca River
Fraser River	Columbia River
Churchill River	Assiniboine River
Red River	

Part G Locate and label the following lakes:

Great Slave Lake	Lake Athabasca
Lake Winnipeg	Lake Superior

Part H Locate and label the following and shade all ocean water dark blue:

Pacific Ocean	Hudson Bay
---------------	------------

Part I Locate and label Vancouver Island and Haida Gwaii.

Part J Complete your map with a frame, title and compass. ★



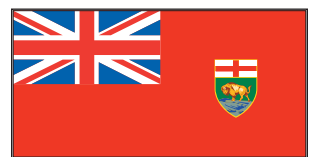
British Columbia



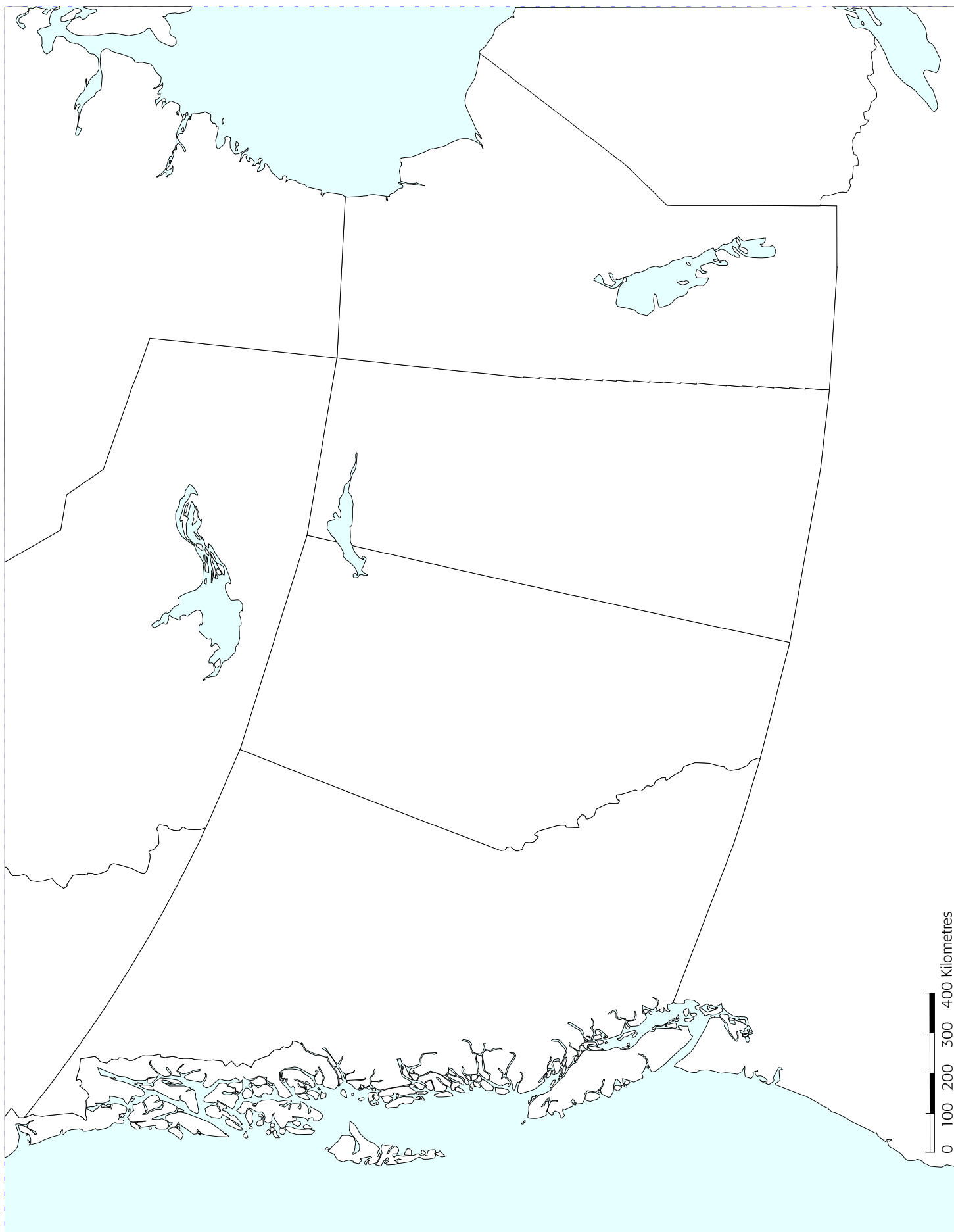
Alberta



Saskatchewan



Manitoba





ALBERTA PUTS CANADA TO THE TEST

– A PETITION ASKS THE QUESTION: SHOULD THE PROVINCE SEPARATE?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

A. Write the letter that corresponds to the best answer on the line beside each question:

_____ 1. When did Alberta join Canada?

- a) 1867
- c) 1914
- e) 1949

- b) 1905
- d) 1920

_____ 2. GDP = Gross _____ Product

- a) Domestic
- c) Debt
- e) Dividend

- b) Demand
- d) Diversified

_____ 3. Which PM imposed the NEP on Alberta in the 1980s?

- a) Steven Harper
- c) Jean Chretien
- e) Justin Trudeau

- b) Pierre Trudeau
- d) Brian Mulroney

B. Mark the statements T (True) or F (False). If a statement is True, write one important fact to support it on the line below. If a statement is False, write the words that make it true on the line below.

_____ 4. **True or False?** Alberta is Canada's fourth-largest province.

_____ 5. **True or False?** The population of Alberta is 7.4 million.

_____ 6. **True or False?** The Alberta Court of Appeal ruled the Stay Free Alberta petition had enough signatures.

C. Fill in the blanks to complete each sentence.

7. ' _____ ' refers to some Albertans feeling overlooked and being treated unfairly by Ottawa. (2)

8. The National _____ Program imposed price controls and taxes on Alberta's oil industry in the 1980s.

9. Danielle _____ is the premier of Alberta.

D. Respond to the following question in paragraph form. (*Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.*)

10. Do you agree that Alberta has some valid political and economic concerns? Why or why not? Give reasons to support your response.



SETTING A PURPOSE BEFORE READING

There are a number of reasons we read, and setting a purpose for reading – knowing WHY we are reading – helps us to focus on important information and to better understand and remember what we read. It also helps us decide HOW we will read the text.

We don't read all texts for the same purposes or in the same way. For example, we read an instruction manual for a new Blu-ray player for a different reason than we read a book or a website. How we will read it – the strategies we use – will also differ. We are more likely to skim to find the information we need in a manual. Once we find what we need, we might read the instructions carefully to figure out what to do. Then, we stop reading, put the manual down, and carry out the steps. We may have to reread if we get confused or forget what to do.

This is a very different approach than the one we would use to read a book. When we read a book, we usually read cover-to-cover. We read carefully so we don't miss any details because we want to understand the whole story. Sometimes we make connections or create images in our minds as we read to help us better understand what we are reading. Depending on its length, we may put the book down before we finish reading it but we will start reading where we left off.

Good readers are flexible and responsive. This means that they match their reading strategies to their purpose for reading. What types of text do you read? Why do you read them? What strategies do you use to read each of these texts? The chart below is a summary of the main purposes for reading and what each entails.

Purpose for reading	What it looks like
For enjoyment	Usually student-selected. Allows students to choose a variety of genres and forms. Allows students to pursue what interests them while developing reading skills.
To experience something new	Students make connections between their personal experiences and those of people around the world.
To learn more about themselves and others	Students reflect on what they've read and express opinions and perspectives. Students develop a sense of their personal values and make sense of the world around them.
To gain information	Students use the features of informational texts to gather, analyse and apply what they've learned.
To understand issues	Students develop a sense of perspective. Students pose questions, acknowledge other points of view, critique the opinions presented and support opinions with evidence.
To appreciate writing	Students respond to text in ways other than written answers to apply what they've learned in new contexts.
To appreciate use of media to communicate	Students respond to a variety of media formats (e.g., infographics, political cartoons, videos, etc.) and react to how the format supports the meaning of the message.

* Chart adapted from: A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4-6, p. 11.

**ASSESSMENT RUBRIC**

This rubric may be helpful in providing students with formative, strength-based feedback and/or assessing students' responses holistically.

	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Extending
Supports thinking	Answers or reflections are brief and include obvious facts/details/evidence.	Answers or reflections are general and supported with some relevant facts/details/evidence.	Answers or reflections are clearly supported with specific, relevant facts/details/evidence.	Answers or reflections are insightful and supported with specific, relevant facts/details/evidence.
Shows understanding	Responses show a basic understanding of the text, topic, issue or message.	Responses are thoughtful and show a general understanding of the text, topic, issue or message.	Responses are thoughtful and show a complete understanding of the text, topic, issue or message.	Responses are insightful and show a deep understanding of the text, topic, issue or message. May synthesize ideas or explain the 'so what'.
Thinks critically	Makes straightforward connections or inferences. Focuses on retelling.	Makes logical connections to self (T:S) and/or background knowledge (T:S). Inferences are logical.	Makes meaningful connections to self. Considers ideas between texts (T:T). Inferences are plausible.	Makes powerful connections that go between texts and/or beyond the text (T:W). Inferences are plausible and insightful.

Current Events, Clearly Explained



Students want to know what's happening in their world –
but the news can be difficult and time-consuming to teach.

WE HAVE THE SOLUTION. (Four, actually.)

The Canadian Reader

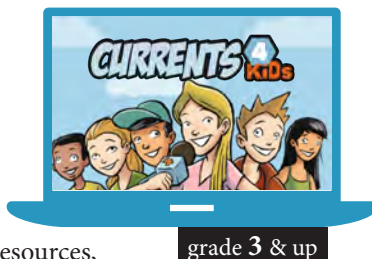
- ✓ PDF/Word resource
- ✓ Clearly written, leveled Canadian current events articles
- ✓ Literacy-based lesson plans
- ✓ Engaging, original illustrations
- ✓ Comics
- ✓ Map assignments



Product details: 8 issues. 38 pages.
Available in English and in French for
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- ✓ Links to relevant articles, resources, maps, photos and videos
- ✓ Extension activities



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Focus on high-interest stories suitable for younger students.

What in the World?

- ✓ PDF/Word resource
- ✓ Four national and international news stories
- ✓ Key vocabulary
- ✓ Background information
- ✓ Varied assignments that build content-area knowledge and enhance critical thinking
- ✓ Maps and illustrations



Product details: 8 issues. 60 pages. Available in English and
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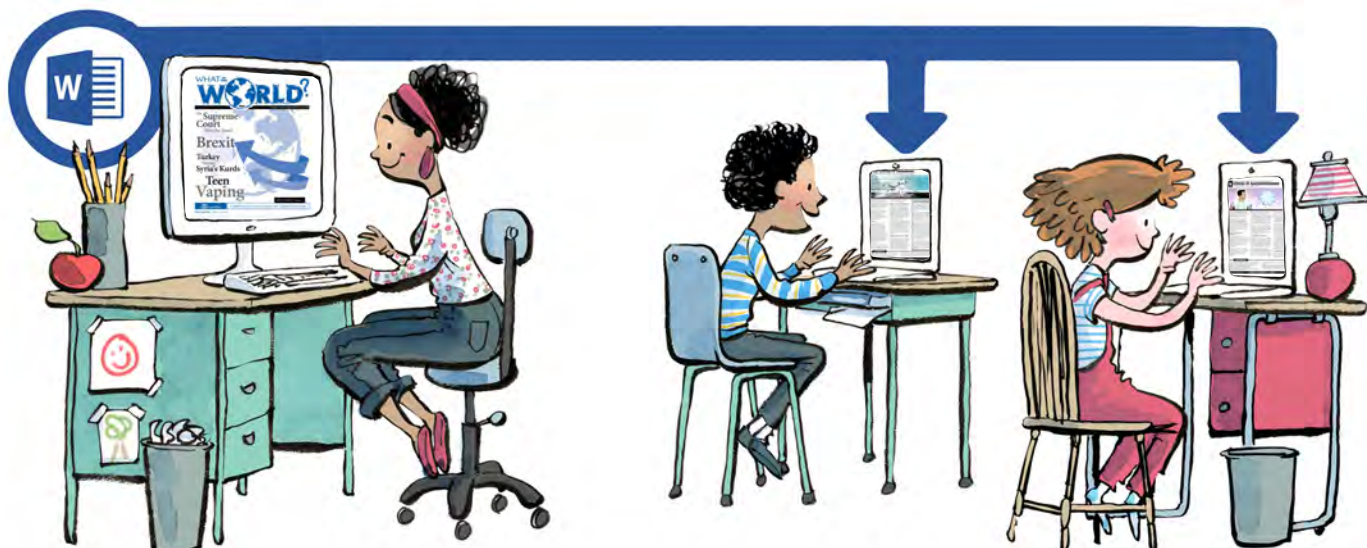
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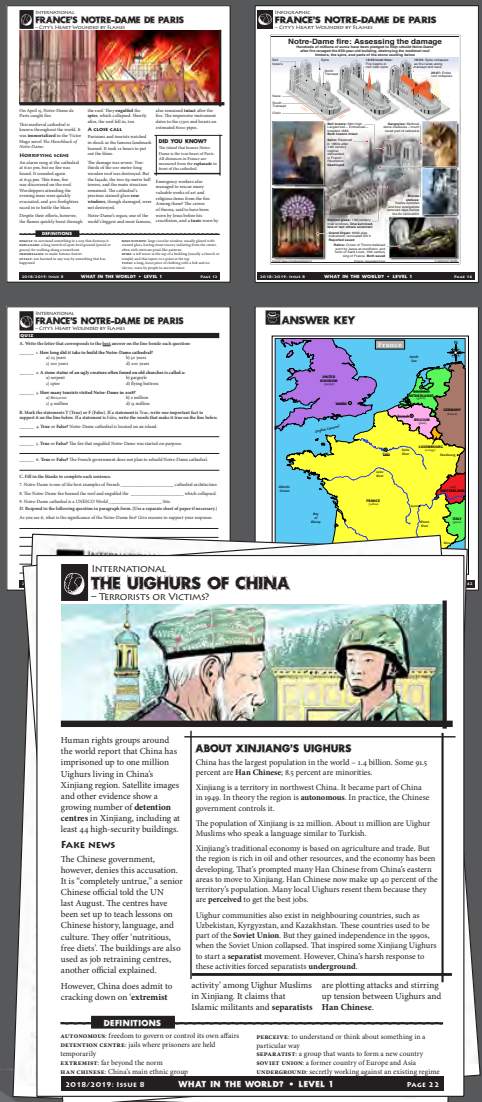
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