

WHAT ^{IN THE} WORLD?

LEVEL 2 (GRADES 8 AND UP)

Drought on the Prairies

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2025/2026: ISSUE 1



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NATIONAL

SUMMER MCINTOSH'S SUMMER OF GOLD



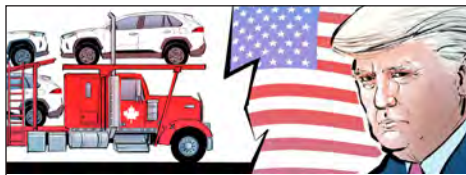
Canada's swimming sensation Summer McIntosh delivered a dazzling performance at the 2025 World Aquatics Championships in Singapore recently, assuring her status as one of Canada's best-ever athletes. Ms. McIntosh is currently regarded as the best female swimmer . . .

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INTERNATIONAL

A TRADE DISPUTE BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS



Canada is bracing for what could be a significant economic hit. The reason? United States President Donald Trump has imposed a stiff tax, called a tariff, on the goods the U.S. imports from other nations. Some countries like Japan got off relatively easy, with tariffs of 10 percent . . .

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TICKED OFF: LYME DISEASE ON THE RISE



It's a perfect day for a late-summer walk along a woodland trail. As you stroll, tall grasses brush against your legs. Little do you realize that a hitchhiker is lurking there, waiting for you to pass. That hitchhiker crawling inside your clothing? It's a black-legged tick—a member of the arachnid family . . .

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WHAT IN THE WORLD?

Level 2, 2025/2026: Issue 1

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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.

We welcome your comments and appreciate your suggestions. Please contact us at any time.

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LesPlan Educational Services Ltd. aims to help teachers develop students' engagement in, understanding of, and ability to critically assess current issues and events by providing quality, up-to-date, affordable, ready-to-use resources appropriate for use across the curriculum.



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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A DRY SUMMER FOR CANADA'S BREADBASKET

– HOW DROUGHT IS IMPACTING PRAIRIE FARMLAND

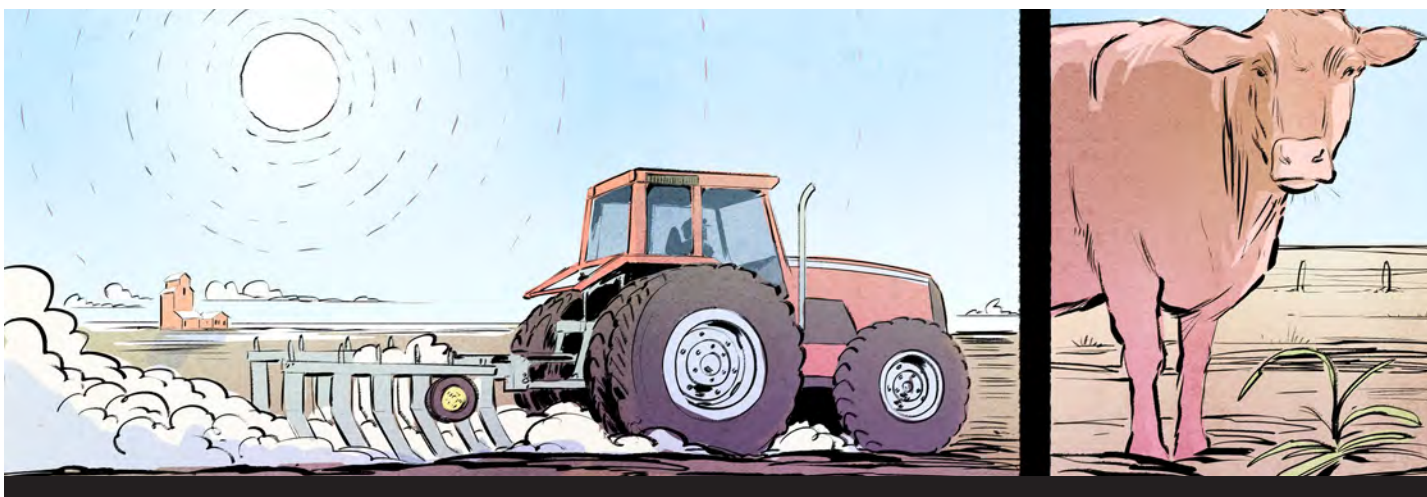
BEFORE READING

1. Write the word 'drought' on the board. Ask students to discuss with a partner what comes to mind when they hear this word. (*E.g., dry, lack of rain, hot temperatures, affects crops, affects people and animals, etc.*)
2. Debrief student answers as a class. Note similarities and differences.
3. Have students watch this video that explains what drought is:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrCGow7ogDQ> [4:22]
4. Finally, invite students to set a purpose for reading the article, referring to the resource page **Setting A Purpose Before Reading** as needed.



A DRY SUMMER FOR CANADA'S BREADBASKET

– HOW DROUGHT IS IMPACTING PRAIRIE FARMLAND



It's been a distressing season for many farmers and ranchers in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

Canada's Prairie region is known for its vast grasslands, fertile farmland, and rich energy resources. For many years, 'Canada's breadbasket' has produced over 90 percent of the country's wheat, and many other crops. The flat prairie plains are ideally suited for growing food to feed Canadians and to export around the world.

But meagre rainfall and an unseasonably hot spring and early summer **parched** many of the rich and vibrant fields. Rivers, lakes, and even dugouts—small artificial ponds farmers dig to collect rain and snowmelt for **livestock**—began to dry out.

EMERGENCY CONDITIONS

In May, the situation was so bad that **Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada** classified 77 percent of the Prairie region as either Abnormally Dry or as experiencing Moderate to Extreme **Drought**. Soil moisture levels across 72 percent of the agricultural landscape

fell to record lows. Conditions deteriorated so much that several areas declared agricultural states of emergency.

Worse, this is the ninth consecutive year that the Prairies have experienced drought. "Everything is short, everything is dying," said Saskatchewan farmer Virginia Maier. "When [drought] goes on for so many years, it's starting to get depressing."

CROPS AND ANIMALS SUFFER

The impact on farming was immediate and severe. Crops like wheat, canola, and barley that usually flourish were threatened. Ranchers faced barren pastures and sold off cattle—they didn't have enough hay to feed the hungry animals. Some turned to **irrigation**, but due to scarce water supplies, the cost of piping in the precious liquid skyrocketed. Some farmers purchased feed to keep their livestock alive. These were costly and temporary fixes.

Wildlife also felt the strain. Thirsty and desperate deer, elk, and other

animals moved closer to settlements to find water. Birds responded to the dry environment by shifting migration routes and changing their habits. Fish populations in lakes and warming rivers declined as they struggled to survive in shrinking **habitats**.

RELIEF FOR SOME . . .

Thankfully, by mid-August, circumstances had improved in some areas. Heavy **precipitation** in late June—a welcome surprise—pulled central Alberta and west-central Saskatchewan back from the brink, with some areas receiving over 100 millimetres of rain. That bolstered soil moisture levels and decreased the worst of the drought conditions.

. . . BUT NOT FOR OTHERS

However, much of southern Saskatchewan and Manitoba stayed very dry. In Saskatchewan, only about 23 percent of cropland topsoil had adequate moisture. That means that just a small portion of the soil's upper layer—where crops grow and absorb water—had enough water to support

DEFINITIONS

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD CANADA: federal department that regulates agriculture, including production, processing, and marketing of all farm, food, and agri-based products

DROUGHT: a period of unusually dry conditions

HABITAT: the natural environment where a plant or animal lives or grows

IRRIGATION: the artificial application of water to land to assist in the growing of crops and other plants

LIVESTOCK: animals raised on farms for practical purposes such as food (meat, milk, eggs), fibre (wool), or labour

PARCHED: very dry, especially from lack of moisture or heat

PRECIPITATION: any form of moisture that falls from the sky

healthy plant growth. The remaining 77 percent of the soil was either “short” or “very short” of moisture.

THE WILDFIRE FACTOR

Adding to the problem? Across Canada, wildfires reached alarming levels in recent months. By early August, over 6.5 million hectares had burned across the country. Over half of this territory was in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, but large parts of Alberta were in flames as well.

The blazes threatened farms, towns, and many isolated rural and First Nations communities. Emergency personnel were stretched thin. Canada’s military helped with evacuations. Other countries, such as Mexico, Australia, and the United States, sent personnel and equipment to help with evacuations and firefighting.

But despite their efforts, tinderbox conditions and the many raging fires caused air quality to deteriorate, posing many health risks—especially to children, the elderly, and those with breathing problems.

A CANADA-WIDE ISSUE

Sadly, the Prairie region wasn’t the only area grappling with tinder-dry conditions. Southwestern Ontario experienced drought that affected corn and soybean crops. Forests, especially maple and other hardwoods, were stressed, and water levels in lakes and rivers dropped, impacting fisheries. Northern Ontario also saw many wildfires.

Atlantic Canada was hit hard too, and persistent heat and dry conditions affected many areas. Much of the region, including Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, as well as parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, experienced below-normal rainfall, with some areas getting less than 60 to 85 percent of their usual

DID YOU KNOW?

The Prairies have a long history of drought. Major dry spells occurred in the 1890s, 1910s, 1930s, 1960s, 1980s, and early 2000s. The 1930s “Dust Bowl” era was especially difficult.

From 1900 to the late 1920s the region experienced large immigration growth and many settlers established farms. They broke the land, cleared the vegetation, and planted crops. In these early years, farms were successful and growing conditions were good. The “breadbasket” thrived during this period.

But the world economy began to crash. The Great Depression, a severe global economic downturn, lasted from 1929 to 1939. These years saw high rates of unemployment and poverty, drastic reductions in industrial production and international trade, and widespread global bank and business failures.

As the 1930s began, the region received meagre precipitation which caused repeated crop devastation. Farmers were impacted by prolonged drought, insect infestations, and the ultimate economic collapse of rural farms.

Farmers struggled to hang on but governments were slow to respond. Banks began repossessing farms and others were abandoned. An estimated 750,000 Canadian farms were lost between 1930 and 1935. Most were in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

precipitation levels. Halifax recorded rainfall at 60 percent of normal levels from April to July. Some outdoor activities were banned, and some Crown lands were closed to the public.

Fierce wildfires broke out in eastern Newfoundland after low winter precipitation and one of the hottest and driest summers ever. Many states of emergency were declared, and thousands of people fled to safety. Evacuation alerts were issued in multiple areas as officials monitored fire behaviour.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

The circumstances causing drought conditions are part of a broader climate story. The severe droughts are linked to shifting **jet stream** patterns, which influence weather. Long-term climate change is also making extreme conditions more common and more intense. The need for a coordinated response and collaboration between provinces has never been greater to better manage water resources, fight fires, and support affected communities.

THE TOLL ON PRAIRIE CROPS

Meanwhile, in southwestern Saskatchewan and parts of Alberta and Manitoba, the drought has caused stunted crop growth, rapid maturity, and uneven development. Farmers are reporting yields so low that some plan to use what they reap for animal feed.

Yet surprisingly, overall crop yield forecasts for the Prairies remain relatively solid. Agriculture Canada says that many spring-planted crops, including wheat and canola, could be near or even above the five-year average in some areas due to favourable weather in other parts of Western Canada. And barley production should be just below the five-year average.

Still, given the ongoing risk of drought and wildfires, farming and ranching are under serious stress.

“I’m going to scrape through [for] maybe another year,” says Quinton Jacksteit, a Saskatchewan farmer, “but I have a couple of boys that want to farm, and it’s not something that I would recommend to them.” ★

DEFINITIONS

JET STREAM: a high-altitude wind current that circles the Earth, typically flowing from west to east



NATIONAL

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– HOW DROUGHT IS IMPACTING PRAIRIE FARMLAND

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which region is called 'Canada's breadbasket'? Explain why.

2. Explain what **drought** is.

3. How often have Prairie farmers experienced severe drought?

4. Describe what happened in Western Canada from 1900 to the late 1920s.

5. What happened to the global economy and to many Prairie farmers in the following years?

6. Describe how the current drought has affected many farmers and ranchers in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

7. How has the drought affected wildlife on the Prairies?

8. How did the drought affect forests and other non-farming communities across Canada?

9. How did drought and wildfires affect Central and Atlantic Canada this summer?



A DRY SUMMER FOR CANADA'S BREADBASKET

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QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

1. Consider the following quote by Saskatchewan farmer Quinton Jacksteit: *"I'm going to scrape through [for] maybe another year, but I have a couple of boys that want to farm, and it's not something that I would recommend to them at this particular time."*

What is your understanding of this quote? As you see it, what is the significance of this quote? Give reasons to support your response.

2. As a result of President Trump's repeated desire to make Canada the 51st state, the Canadian federal government and provincial and territorial leaders have pledged to remove trade barriers in Canada to support the economy and strengthen the Canadian identity. As you see it, how might this national collaboration support regions that are harder hit by severe conditions like drought and wildfires? Support your response with examples.



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QUESTIONS FOR ONLINE EXPLORATION

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

1. Learn more about the drought conditions in each of the Prairie Provinces and how each province has dealt with them:

a) Manitoba

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/drought-agricultural-disaster-emergency-1.7588473>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/hot-dry-weather-manitoba-may-2025-1.7533226> [1:43] (article and video)

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/audio/9.6864140> [6:11]

b) Saskatchewan

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/rural-saskatchewan-faces-drought-declare-state-of-emergency-1.7577980> [1:51]

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/drought-farmers-southwest-1.7563692> [2:08]

c) Alberta

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/northern-alta-agricultural-disaster-1.7588678> [9:17] (podcast)

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/bone-dry-summer-southeast-alberta-1.7579351> [1:59]

What questions do you have?

2. Check out these interactive maps from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada that show monthly drought comparisons, a drought change map, and an animation of drought across Canada over the last 20 years:

<https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/agricultural-production/weather/canadian-drought-monitor/drought-analysis>

What did you learn?

3. Learn how drought has impacted other parts of the country:

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/video/9.6858545> [2:00]

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/life-smacked-us-nova-scotians-grappling-without-water-amid-drought-1.7604144> [1:45] [1:29]

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/eastern-ontario-conservation-authorities-water-conservation-drought-conditions-1.7602368> [2:48]

What similarities and differences did you notice between these regions and the Prairies?

4. The Canada Water Agency was established to promote freshwater stewardship in Canada. Check out the agency's website:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canada-water-agency/freshwater-stewardship/freshwater-coordination-collaboration.html>

5. Find out more about fire prevention methods like controlled burns that may reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires:

<https://parks.canada.ca/nature/science/conservation/feu-fire/dirige-prescribed>

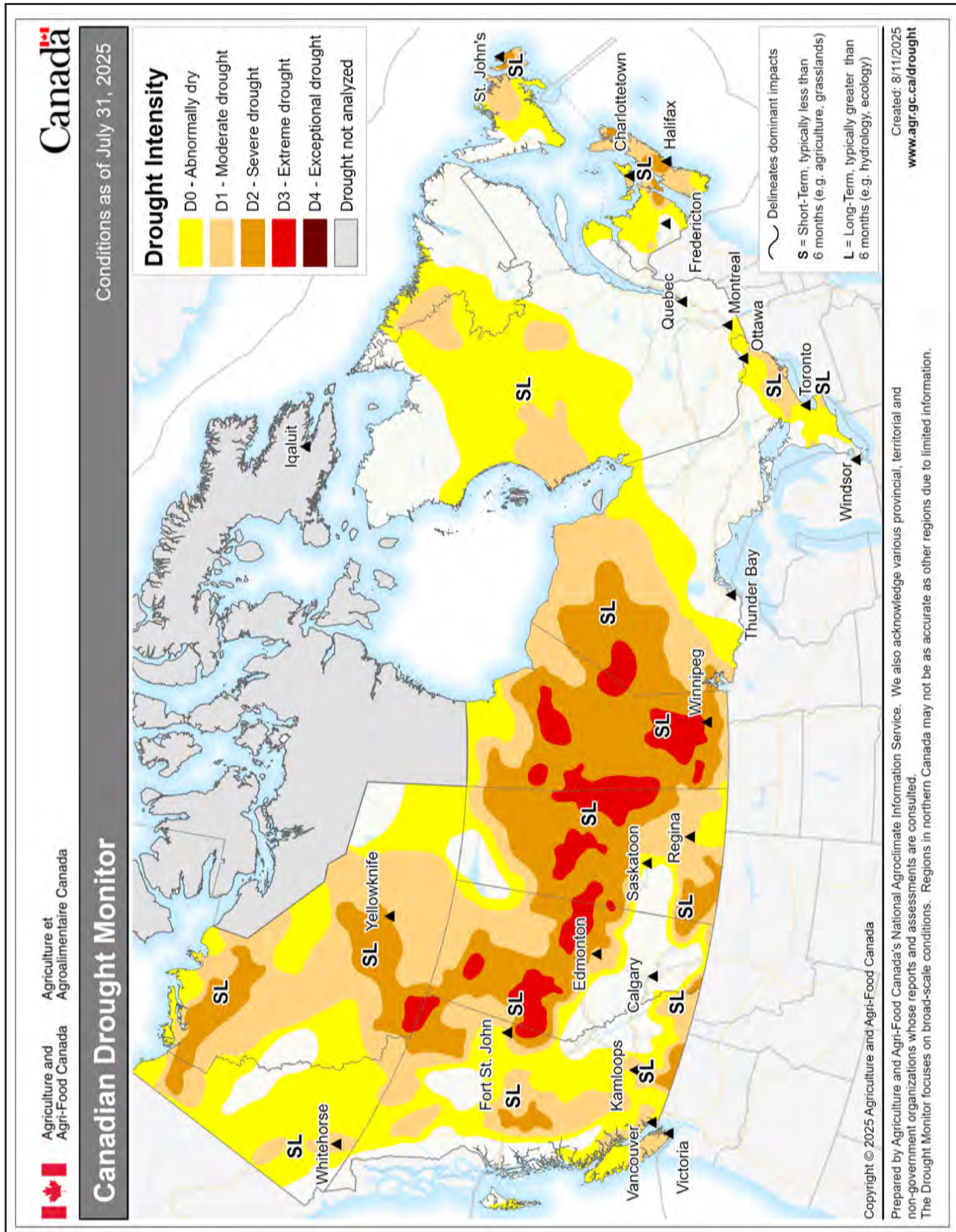


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INFOGRAPHIC



<https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/agricultural-production/weather/canadian-drought-monitor/current-drought-conditions>

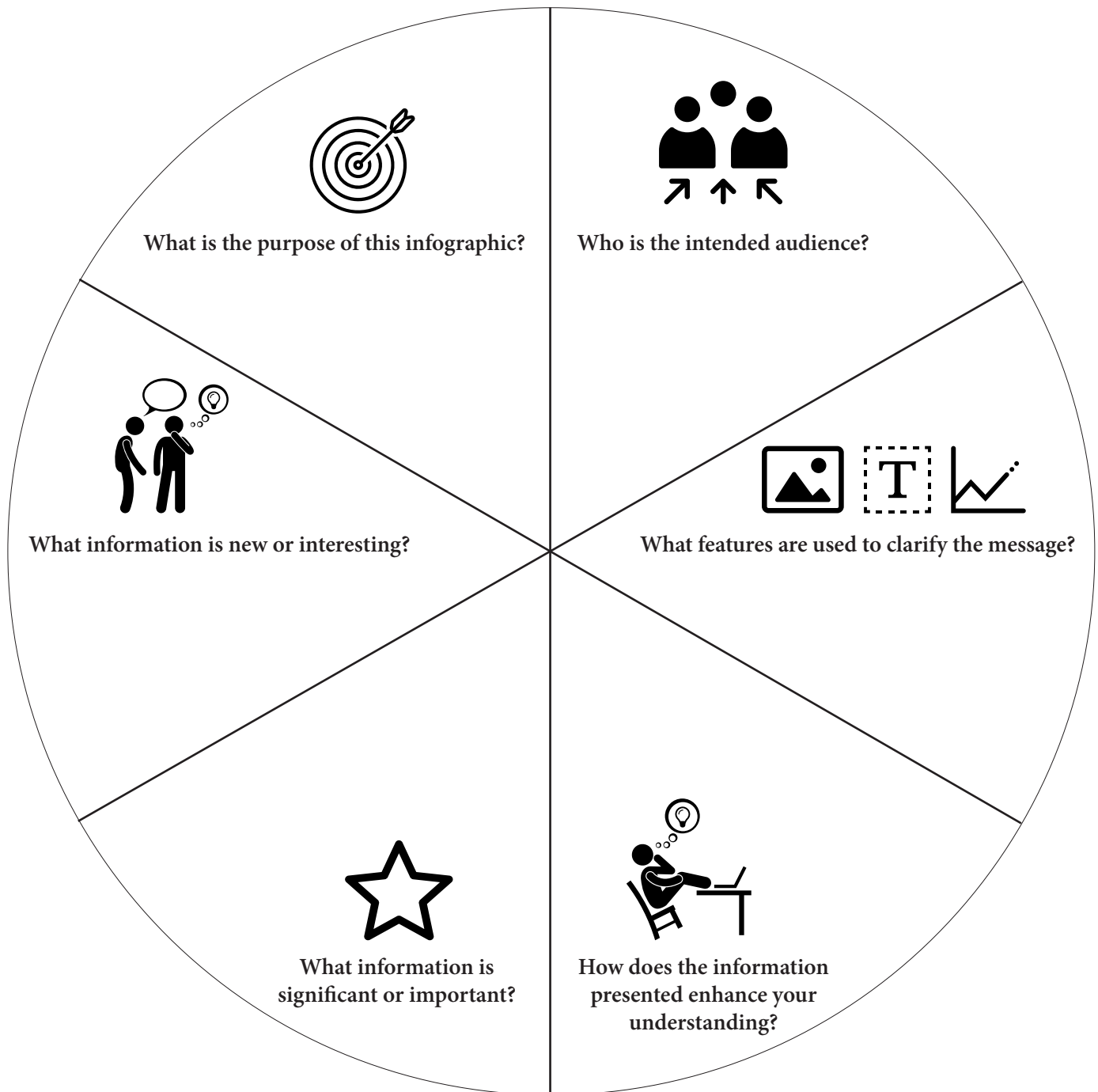


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ANALYZING AN INFOGRAPHIC



What questions do you still have about the topic presented?



Complete this map assignment to better understand the article *A Dry Summer for Canada's Breadbasket*.

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:

Alberta (yellow)

Saskatchewan (green)

Manitoba (red)

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

Part C Locate and label the following provinces and territories and shade each as indicated:

Northwest Territories (brown)

Yukon (orange)

Nunavut (pink)

British Columbia (pink)

Ontario (purple)

Part D Locate and label the following cities:

Calgary

Red Deer

Saskatoon

Prince Albert

Brandon

Steinbach

Part E Locate and label the following U.S. states and shade each as indicated:

Washington (green)

Idaho (orange)

Montana (brown)

North Dakota (yellow)

Minnesota (orange)

Part F Locate and label Hudson Bay and shade all salt water dark blue.

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

Lake Winnipeg

Lake Manitoba

Lake Winnipegosis

Lake of the Woods

Great Slave Lake

Lake Athabasca

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

Peace River

Athabasca River

Slave River

Mackenzie River

Churchill River

Nelson River

North Saskatchewan River

South Saskatchewan River

Red River

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



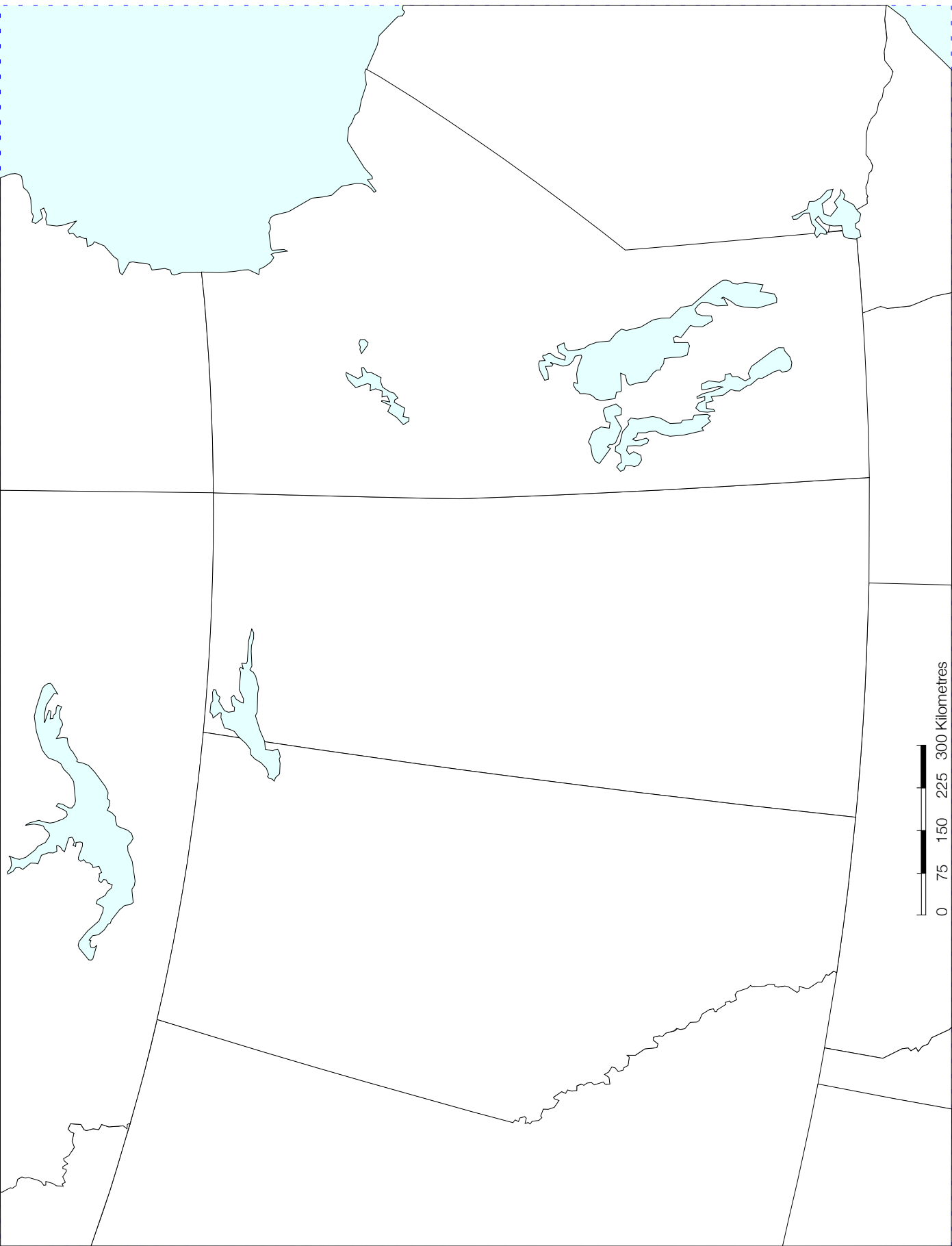
Alberta



Saskatchewan



Manitoba





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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

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

_____ 1. Which provinces are known as Canada's breadbasket?

- a) B.C., Alberta, and Saskatchewan
- b) Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba
- c) Alberta, Manitoba, and Yukon
- d) B.C., Manitoba, and Alberta
- e) Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario

_____ 2. The severe world-wide economic downturn that lasted from 1929 to 1939 was called:

- a) Black Monday
- b) Recession Emergency
- c) Economic Bubble
- d) Subprime Mortgage Crisis
- e) Great Depression

_____ 3. The artificial application of water to land to help in growing crops and other plants is called:

- a) pipelining
- b) sprinkling
- c) irrigation
- d) soaking
- e) flooding

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?** Many farmers settled on the Prairies from 1900 through to the late 1920s.

_____ 5. **True or False?** Wildfire firefighters in Canada received help from Mexico, Australia, and the U.S.

_____ 6. **True or False?** Despite the drought, many spring-planted Prairie crops are expected to produce an average yield.

C. Fill in the blanks to complete each sentence.

7. Some _____ farms were lost on the Prairies between 1930 and 1935.

8. In some Atlantic provinces, _____ lands were closed to the public.

9. Severe droughts are linked to shifting _____ patterns. (2)

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

10. In what ways could the drought in the Prairie region be considered a concern for all Canadians? 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.

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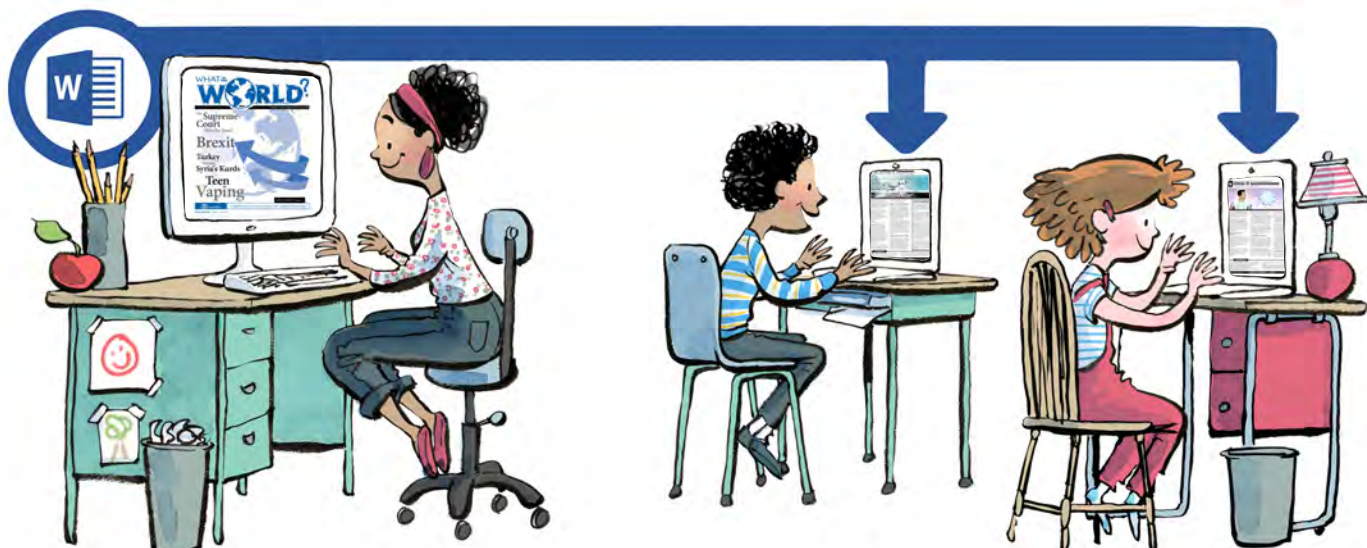
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- easily modify and format content including changing **fonts** and **text** sizes
- create a PDF document and use **Adobe Reader's** 'Read Out Loud Mode'
- save paper and copying costs and help protect the environment
- promote and encourage students' computer skills

Data in the Word file

There are **three** ways to access data from a Word file:

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- 2) Import the entire Word file into **LibreOffice** (or another similar program) and then save as a new file.
- 3) Create a new file in a different format. Use the **Word Save As** command to choose: 1) plain text, 2) rich text format (RTF), 3) Web page (.htm), 4) PDF, etc.

Google Docs and LibreOffice

- You can easily upload the Word file to **Google Docs** and share it with students or other teachers.
- You can translate a **Google Docs** file into another language (see *Tools>Translate document*) but you will need to edit the document to suit your requirements. **Google Docs** can translate into over 100 languages including Spanish, Mandarin, and German.
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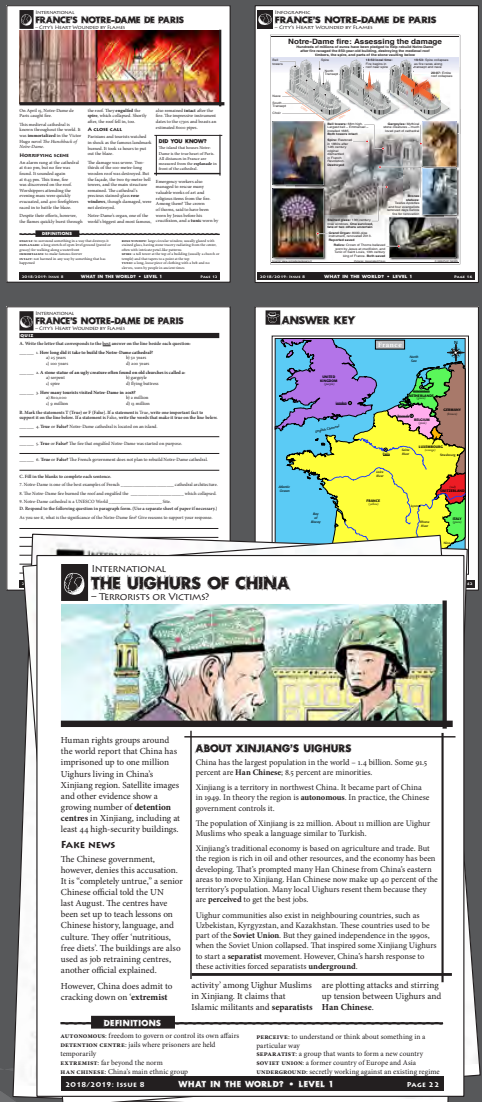
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