

# The Canadian Reader

Current Canadian events and issues for students in Grades 3 and up



**Free  
Sample**

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- A News Story
- Lesson Plan
- Organizer

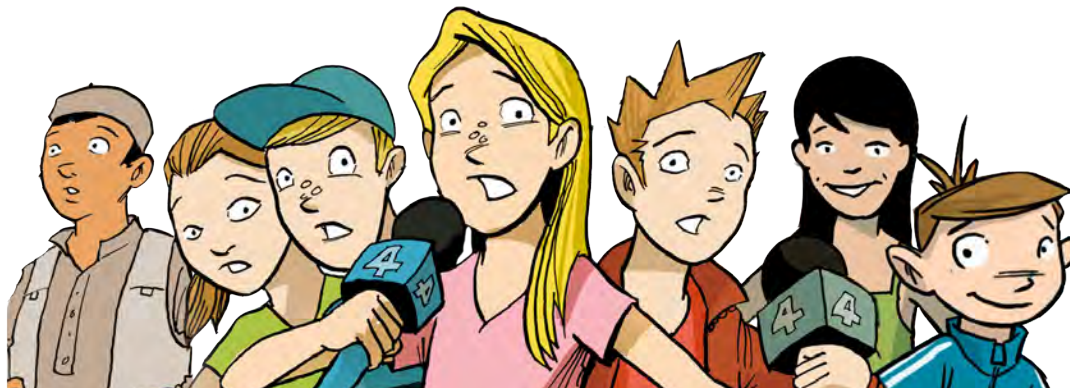
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4 Free Article: *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*

6 Comprehension Check | 7 Language Focus

8 Lesson Plan | 11 Four Quadrants

13 Comics: *The Great Lakes*



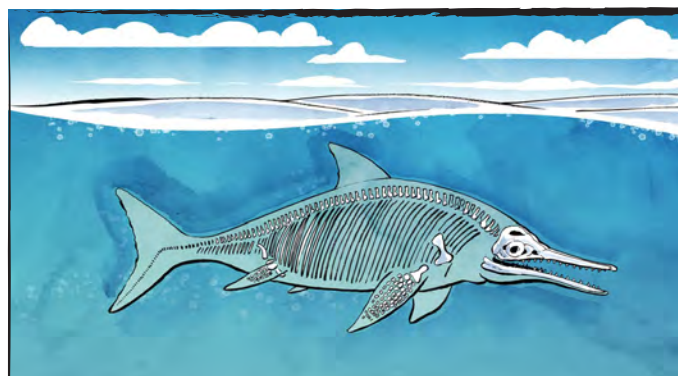
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# The Canadian Reader

**Current Canadian events and issues for students in grades 3 and up.**

**The Canadian Reader** is published eight times during the school year in English and in French from September through May by LesPlan Educational Services Ltd.

Subscribe to **The Canadian Reader** at a cost of \$230 per year (\$28.75 per issue), by contacting us at:

LesPlan Educational Services Ltd.  
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## How to use this resource:

**The Canadian Reader** is a made-in-Canada teaching and learning resource featuring all-Canadian content. It has three main components; use the entire package, or pick and choose the pages that suit your class the best.

1. **Literacy Focus** – This generic lesson plan focuses on seven key non-fiction reading comprehension strategies, presented in the following order:

Issue 1: *Using Text Features*

Issue 2: *Making Connections*

Issue 3: *Visualizing*

Issue 4: *Asking Questions*

Issue 5: *Making Inferences*

Issue 6: *Determining Importance*

Issue 7: *Transforming/Synthesizing*

Issue 8: *Reading Strategies Review and Assessment*

Teachers may introduce and practice each month's strategy using any of the articles in the issue, or save it for another time or text.

2. **Canadian news stories** – Each of the three articles is leveled and accompanied by Comprehension Check questions, a Language Focus, and a literacy-based lesson plan and supporting materials. Teach the lessons as they are presented, or pick and choose the activities and assignments you'd like to explore with your students.

3. **Did You Know? comic** – This comic provides basic information about a current news story or event, or supports one of the articles with background information. It's a great way to engage reluctant readers and build students' background knowledge in a fun and graphic way.

**Note:** All URLs referenced in **The Canadian Reader** are posted as links on our student website at <http://www.lesplan.com/en/links>. Bookmark this URL on your school's computer network to give students easy access to our recommended sites.

**Share The Canadian Reader with other staff members in your school, including itinerant, relief, and substitute teachers.**



# The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*



November 9, 1975. The huge ship set out from Superior, Wisconsin, headed east to Detroit, Michigan.

It had made the trip across Lake Superior many times before. The lake is an important shipping route. This time, the ship's load of iron ore made it sit low in the water.

A storm was brewing. The captain chose a route near Canada's shoreline. The rocky highlands would help protect ship and crew.

The ship travelled east through a day and a night. Wind and waves grew. By morning, winds reached 50 knots (over 90 kilometres per hour). Each hour, the storm strengthened. The ship took damage but kept going.

By evening, the ship had reached the east end of Lake Superior. There was nothing to break the hurricane-force winds. Heavy weather on the Great Lakes is dangerous. Waves there are steeper than on the ocean, and closer together.

The captain tried to reach shelter. After 7 p.m., radio contact was lost. The ship, and its crew of 29 men, never reached shore.

Did the ship break apart? Was it swamped? Fifty years later, we still don't know what happened. But we remember.

## *The Edmund Fitzgerald*

Between 1875 and 1975, more than 6000 ships sank in the Great Lakes. Most Canadians can name only one. This one.

Why? Likely because the great *Edmund Fitzgerald* lives on in song.

In 1975, when Canadian singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot learned about the shipwreck, the story moved him. He thought the 29 men who had died deserved to be remembered.

Mr. Lightfoot was working on a sea-shanty melody at the time. He decided this was the story the song needed to tell.

*The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald* became an unlikely hit. It didn't have a chorus. It was six minutes long. Most popular songs were less than half that length.

The song told the ship's story honestly. It told it with caring and respect. Maybe that was what reached people.

## A legacy of safety

Mr. Lightfoot's song drew attention to the ship's fate. In the years that followed, rules were changed to make travel on the Great Lakes safer.

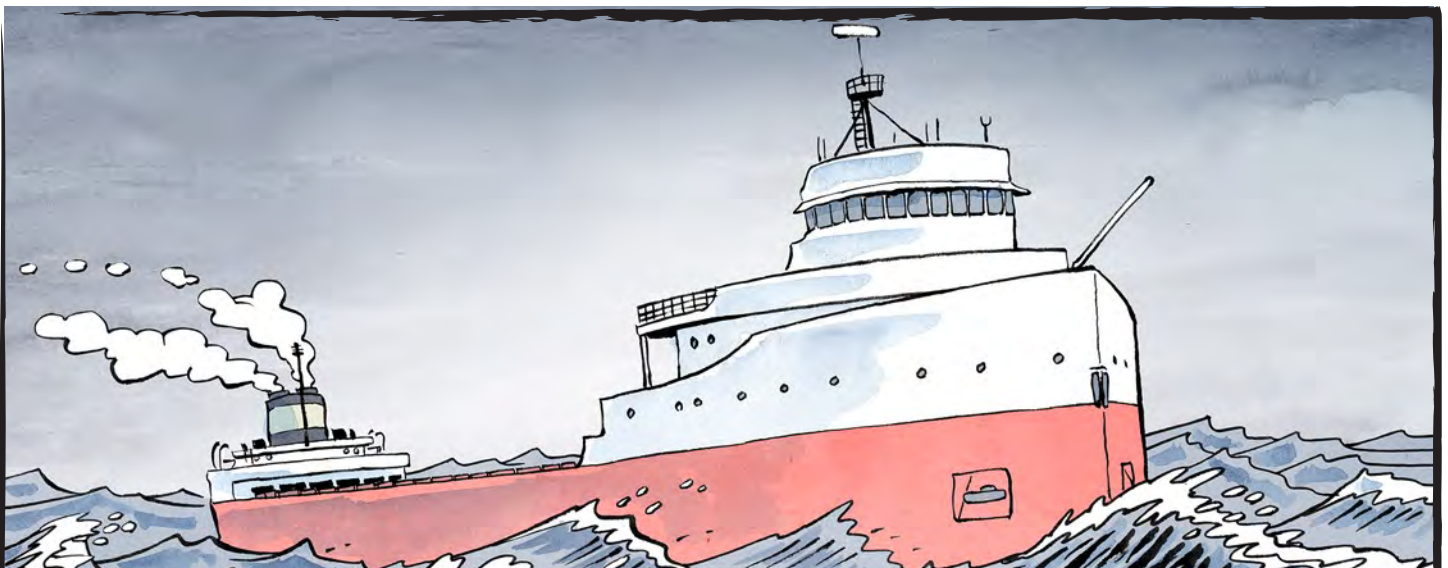
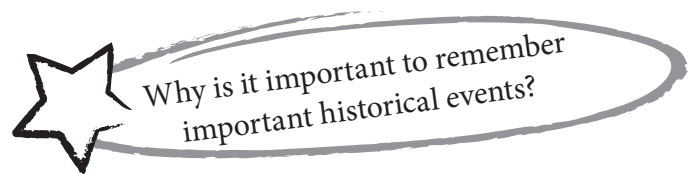
There has not been a commercial shipwreck on the Great Lakes since. Perhaps that is the *Edmund Fitzgerald's* legacy.

## Fifty years

November 2025 marked fifty years since the disaster. In locations around Lake Superior, people gathered to remember. There was even a memorial swim, done relay-style. The swim followed the route that would have led the ship to safety.

In 1975, the bell at Detroit's Mariners' Church rang out 29 times. Once for each man aboard the *Edmund Fitzgerald*.

This year, it rang 30 times. The thirtieth was to remember all lives lost at sea.



Gordon Lightfoot updated his lyrics twice, to better reflect the truth. A “musty hall” became a “rustic hall.” A line about a hatchway caving in was replaced entirely.

## The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*

### Comprehension Check

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

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Lake Superior is an important shipping route.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The *Edmund Fitzgerald* was carrying iron ore when it sank.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The *Edmund Fitzgerald* is the only ship ever to sink in the Great Lakes.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Gordon Lightfoot wrote a song called *The Crash of the Edmund Fitzgerald*.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Twenty-nine men died when the *Edmund Fitzgerald* sank.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. November 2025 marked 50 years since the ship sank.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*

## Language Focus

An **antonym** is a word that means the opposite of another word.

**Examples:** good/bad, true/false, high/low

**Directions:** Find the antonym for each word in the article.

Word	Antonym
small	
endanger	
shrunk	
light	
safe	
found	
forget	

Now choose two pairs of words from the table above. Use each of the words in a sentence that shows its meaning.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*

## Lesson Plan

### Before Reading:

#### Literacy Focus: Active Listening

- ☐ Invite students to brainstorm different ways societies remember important events. Use *Think-Pair-Share*, then record ideas on a class chart.
- ☐ Explain that *historical significance* helps us decide which events we remember, why they happened, and how they continue to affect or shape people today.
- ☐ Write the article title on the board. Ask:
  - What do you know about the sinking of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* on November 9, 1975?
  - Have you ever heard Gordon Lightfoot's song about the wreck?
- ☐ Explain that the ballad was written so that the 29 crew members would not be forgotten, and that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the tragedy.
- ☐ Distribute the **Four Quadrants** organizer (p. 30-31) to each student. Clarify what belongs in each section. You may wish to model an example of each using the text in the illustration caption. For example: *Words*: write lyrics, truth; *Images*: sketch a hatchway caving in from the pressure of the waves; *Sensory details*: add rusty not musty hall; *Feelings*: gratefulness.

### During Reading:

- ☐ Read the article aloud in 2-3 paragraph chunks. After each section, pause for students to add notes to their organizer. Have partners "show and tell" one notation from any quadrant.
- ☐ Periodically prompt:
  - Which quadrant is getting the most attention?
  - Which one is being overlooked?

### After Reading:

- ☐ Discuss students' surprises, questions, and connections. Invite them to pull ideas from all four quadrants.
- ☐ Then watch or listen to *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald* (see the **Teacher's Corner** for suggested links) twice: once to listen, and a second time to annotate and add new insights to their quadrants.
- ☐ Discuss:
  - What does the song help you to understand about the tragedy that the article does not show us as clearly? (e.g., emotional tone, perspective, empathy, respect, honouring the crew)
  - How does the music itself act as a memorial?
  - Why is this song still played 50 years later?
  - How can songs function as historical documents?
- ☐ Encourage students to compare how the article and the song each convey information, emotion, point of view, and remembrance.



# The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*

## Lesson Plan

- ☐ Ask students to complete these questions on the back of their organizer (p.31) These questions focus explicitly on **historical significance**:
  1. Why is the sinking of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* considered historically significant?
  2. What lasting impacts did the tragedy have on shipping safety, on communities around Lake Superior, or on public memory?
  3. How does Gordon Lightfoot's song help keep the memory of the 29 crew members alive?
  4. What makes the song itself historically significant?
  5. What does this event teach us about life on the Great Lakes, or about the dangers sailors faced?
- ☐ **Criteria for Assessment:** An effective reflection is *informative* (supported by main ideas and details from the article); is *explained in your own words*; and includes *plausible reasons* (likely to be true based on the evidence in the article and understanding of historical significance).

## Extensions:

- ☐ **Learn more about historical significance:** Explicitly teach the criteria of historical significance, including: *had deep impact at the time* (local, national, globally); *affected many people or key groups*; *changed things* (e.g., laws, safety rules, technology, beliefs); *reveal something important about the past*; *remembered over time through memorials, songs, stories, rituals, or anniversaries*. Ask students to review the article, identifying evidence for each criterion. Then, have them write a short explanation titled “*Why We Still Remember the Edmund Fitzgerald*”.
- ☐ **Create a commemorative plaque:** Encourage students to design a commemorative plaque from 2025 remembering the shipwreck. Look at several examples of commemorative plaques online to elicit ideas for design and inscriptions. Display the completed plaques on a Memory Wall.

## Internet Connections:

- ☐ Learn more about this news story:  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/edmund-fitzgerald-50-year-anniversary-9.6971199>  
[https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/music/no-chorus-no-problem-the-improbable-story-behind-gordon-lightfoots-beloved-hit-the-wreck-of/article\\_99885686-2a9d-4d04-b9c0-4f3e1ce437ac.html](https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/music/no-chorus-no-problem-the-improbable-story-behind-gordon-lightfoots-beloved-hit-the-wreck-of/article_99885686-2a9d-4d04-b9c0-4f3e1ce437ac.html)
- ☐ Watch a video on the history of the ship:  
<https://www.jsonline.com/story/opinion/2025/11/08/edmund-fitzgerald-ship-sinking-gordon-lightfoot-song/87104714007/> [1:39]
- ☐ Look at photos of the ship:  
<https://www.jsonline.com/picture-gallery/life/green-sheet/2025/10/29/photos-tell-the-story-of-the-edmund-fitzgerald-and-its-tragic-1975-sinking/86436701007/>
- ☐ This documentary explores the story of the ship, the song, and their legacy:  
<https://youtu.be/osAvIsgwIVo?si=-higBQHemlyWIKYO> [16:00]

# The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*

## Lesson Plan

### □ Teacher's Corner:

Listen to Gordon Lightfoot sing *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*:

<https://youtu.be/FuzTkGyxkYI?si=OUzACGk9PezjCnbZ> [5:58]

Download the lyrics:

[https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/Gordon-Lightfoot/The-Wreck-of-the-Edmund-Fitzgerald?](https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/Gordon-Lightfoot/The-Wreck-of-the-Edmund-Fitzgerald?si=OUzACGk9PezjCnbZ)

Or watch a third option that combines the song with the lyrics:

<https://youtu.be/9vST6hVRj2A?si=Y1Ke6Y6iufp5D6oJ> [6:39]

Detailed interview with Gordon Lightfoot. Fast forward to [13:15-15:00] to hear him talk about

writing the song and play excerpts from it: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/video/2025/11/10/from-2017-gordon-lightfoot-on-creating-hit-song-the-wreck-of-the-edmund-fitzgerald/>

Examples of Memorial Plaques:

<https://www.internationalbronze.com/memorial-plaques>

<https://ca.pinterest.com/bronzememorials/memorial-plaques/>

*Note:* All URLs are posted as links at <https://www.lesplan.com/en/links>

# The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*

## Four Quadrants

Images (mental pictures/details)	Feelings/Emotions
Words (spoken/thought)	Sensory Information (sounds, scents, textures, motion)

# The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*

## Historical Significance

Answer the questions below in complete sentences:

1. Why is the sinking of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* considered historically significant?

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2. What lasting impacts did the tragedy have on shipping safety, on communities around Lake Superior, or on public memory?

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3. How does Gordon Lightfoot's song help keep the memory of the 29 crew members alive?

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4. What makes the song itself historically significant?

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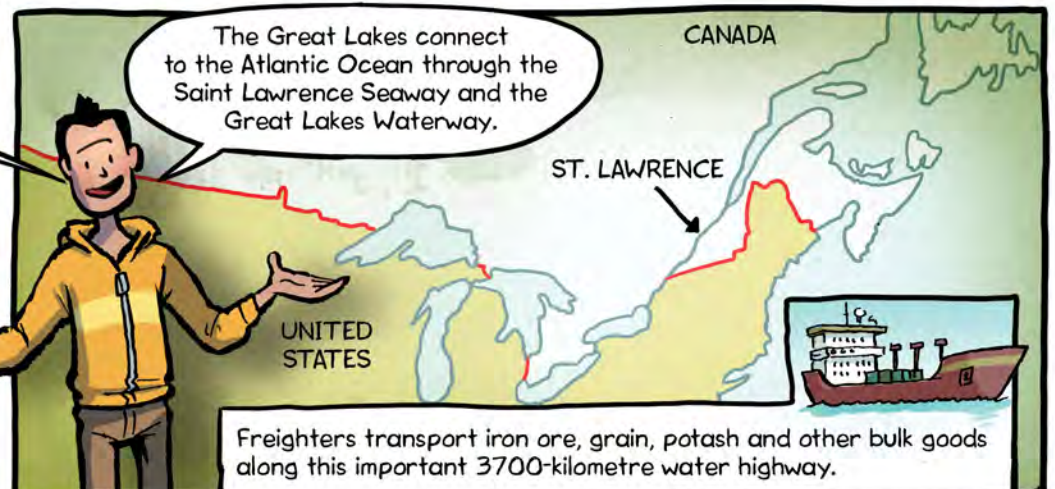
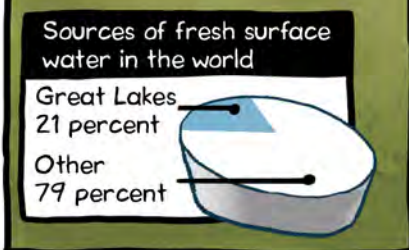
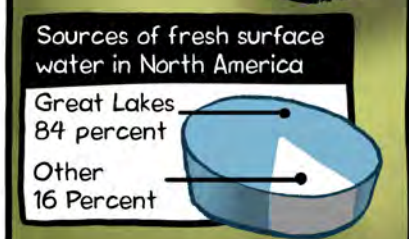
5. What does this event teach us about life on the Great Lakes, or about the dangers sailors faced?

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# The Great Lakes

## Comprehension Check

Write the letter of the *best* answer in the space beside each question.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Which Canadian province borders the Great Lakes?

- a) Quebec
- b) Ontario
- c) Michigan
- d) none of the above

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Which Great Lake is located entirely in the U.S.?

- a) Lake Superior
- b) Lake Huron
- c) Lake Michigan
- d) Lake Erie

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. How much of the world's supply of fresh surface water is found in the Great Lakes?

- a) 84 percent
- b) 79 percent
- c) 21 percent
- d) 16 percent

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Which of the following are the Great Lakes used for?

- a) drinking water
- b) transporting bulk goods
- c) energy
- d) all of the above

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Which salt water body do the Great Lakes connect to?

- a) the Atlantic Ocean
- b) the Pacific Ocean
- c) James Bay
- d) none of the above

As you see it, what is *most important* about the Great Lakes for Canada? Give reasons to explain your response.

# Current Events, Clearly Explained



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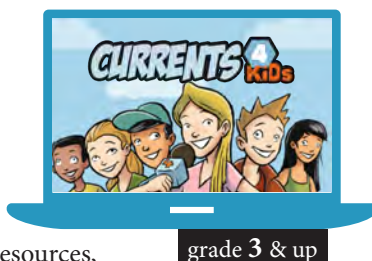
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## Did you know...

... that each issue of *The Canadian Reader* includes a PDF file (complete document) and a Word file (articles and questions only)

Students can complete assignments directly in a Word file. Teachers can email the file to students or post it on the Internet. The Word file also allows teachers to:

- 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:

- 1) Select the data you wish to **Copy** and then **Paste** it into any word processing program. Use **Select All** to copy the entire document.
- 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.
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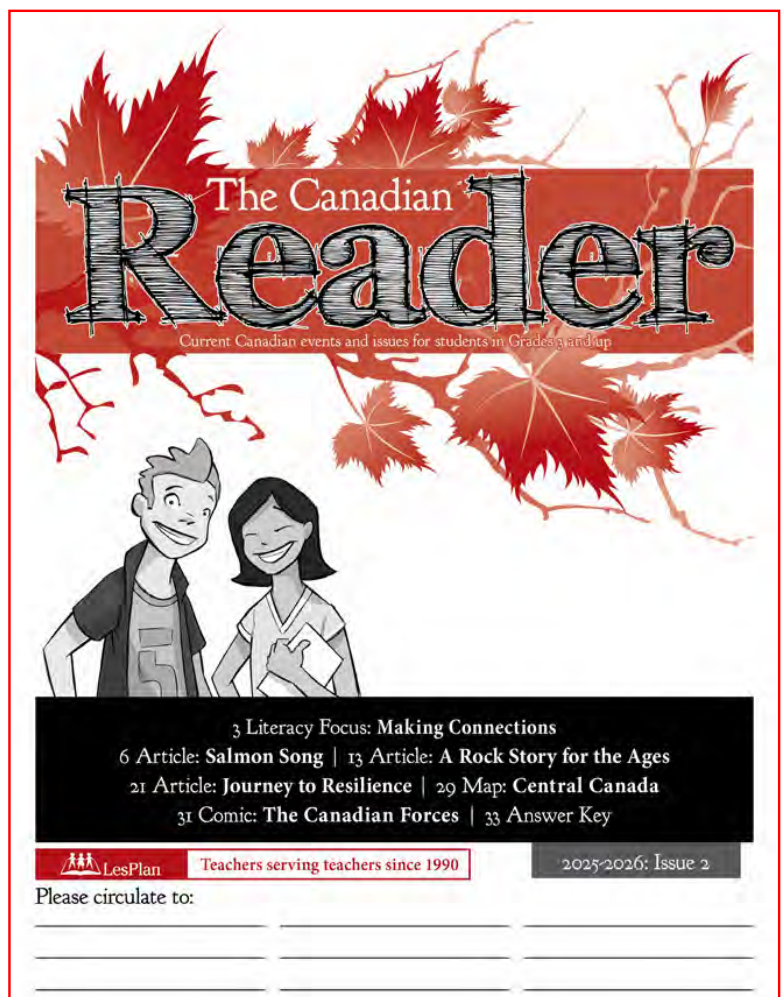
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