

Christie Pits

RIOT

90TH COMMEMORATION

Immigration & Diversity Education
Resource: Grades 5+

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1. Archives Overview

The Ontario Jewish Archives

The Ontario Jewish Archives, Blankenstein Family Heritage Centre (OJA) is the largest repository of Jewish life in Canada. Founded in 1973, the OJA, a department of UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, acquires, preserves, and makes accessible the records that chronicle our province's Jewish history. The collection documents organizations, individuals, synagogues, schools, summer camps, leisure, athletes, and businesses.

There are many ways to explore the OJA's collection and learn about the province's Jewish past. You can make an appointment to look at photographs, films, Yiddish newspapers, hand-written correspondence, and even an original Superman drawing! Through exhibitions, programs, research assistance, and walking tours, the OJA tells the stories of Ontario's Jewish community.

The OJA reaches people of all ages from children in the classroom, to scholars in the universities, to teens researching their grandparents, to adults discovering their family history, and to seniors re-connecting with their pasts. The OJA services over 600 researchers per year, including academics, students, curators, genealogists, filmmakers, radio and television producers, journalists, UJA Federation staff, Jewish agencies, and other organizations.

About the Project

The Christie Pits riot is relatively unknown to many Torontonians, despite it being the largest outbreak of ethnic violence in Canadian History. Instigated by the notorious "Pit Gang", the riot occurred on 16 August 1933 at Toronto's Christie Pits (Willowvale Park) at a baseball game between the Harbord Playground and St. Peter's teams. The riot was the culmination of years of persistent and insidious antisemitism levelled at Toronto's Jewish residents. It is now understood as a watershed moment in the Jewish community's history when self-advocacy and allyship became central pillars of communal life. However, Christie Pits is not solely a Jewish event, as Italian allies and supporters who were participants in the riot have their own stories that have been circulated and shared within their community.

In May and June 2023, the Ontario Jewish Archives, in partnership with the Toronto District School Board's Jewish and Italian Heritage Committees and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs partnered to present *The Riot at Christie Pits*, a live theatrical production presented by The Hogtown Collective, created by Sam Rosenthal and Drew Carnwath with music by Measha Brueggogman. Produced by Hogtown Productions.

Using Primary Sources

What is a primary source?

Primary sources are original materials that were created at the time under study. Examples of primary sources are an artifact, document, diary, photograph, or autobiography. On the *Scrolling Spadina* website, there are primary sources available at each tour stop underneath the videos.

What is a secondary source?

Secondary sources are materials that are second-hand, often created after the event or time-period being studied. Secondary sources are often based on an analysis of primary sources and offer judgements about past events/issues, such as books and magazine articles. Some materials that begin as secondary sources can sometimes be studied as primary sources. For example, someone interested in the history of education may use a textbook from the 1950s as a primary source.

What is archive-based learning?

By using primary sources as a point of inquiry, students are provided with an unfiltered and first-hand account of the people, places, and events under study. Archives-based learning helps students:

Archives Based Learning

1. Think critically

Primary sources require the user to examine the records and draw conclusions based upon the evidence found in the source. All the required information for understanding the context of the record is not necessarily always present. Students must consider the creator's bias or subjectivity, the intended audience, and the reliability of the information when making assumptions or inferences.

2. Consider perspective

History consists of multiple viewpoints. Primary sources can be used to consider different perspectives when analyzing information. These perspectives can be shaped by both current and historical narratives.

3. Construct knowledge

Forming reasoned conclusions based on facts and evidence requires the use of primary sources. When students can connect the information gleaned from primary sources with information gleaned from other sources of research, they deepen their understanding and construct a base of knowledge that can be applied to other learning opportunities.

4. Understand their part in history

Primary sources teach students that they too are participating in history. Their actions, thoughts, and relationships are part of a continuum of history that will one day form our understanding of the past.

2. Learning Outcomes & Connections

About This Guide

The *Christie Pits Riot Resource Guide* outlines the knowledge and experience that students in grades eight and ten can acquire by using the *Christie Pits Riot* website and the educational resources. Each lesson contains a pre and post discussion guides and activities that engage directly with the content on the Christie Pits Riot website. A supplementary teacher's guide with guiding questions and responses accompanies this package along with the worksheets and resources referred to in the lesson plan.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Be able to identify conditions of the immigrant experience during the 1930s in Toronto;
2. Understand the political and social climate of Toronto in the 1930s;
3. Be able to recognize and describe the issues that the Jewish community faced in Toronto in the early twentieth century;
4. Be able to identify how antisemitism played a part in the events of the Christie Pits Riot
5. Learn how to recognize details in primary source materials.

Ontario Curriculum Connections

Grade 8: History

Strand B. Canada, 1890 – 1914: A Changing Society

B1. assess key similarities and differences between Canada in 1890–1914 and in the present day, with reference to the experiences of, major challenges facing, and actions taken by various individuals, groups, and/or communities.

B2. use the historical inquiry process to investigate perspectives of different groups and communities, on some significant events, developments, and/or issues that affected Canada and/or people in Canada between 1890 and 1914.

B3. describe various significant people, issues, events, and developments in Canada.

Grade 8: Geography

Strand B. Global Inequalities: Economic Development and Quality of Life

B1. analyse some interrelationships among factors that contribute to global inequalities, with a focus on inequalities in quality of life, and assess various responses to these inequalities.

B2. use the geographic inquiry process to investigate issues related to global development and quality of life from a geographic perspective.

B3. demonstrate an understanding of significant patterns in and factors affecting economic development and quality of life in different regions of the world.

Grade 10: Canadian History since World War I**Strand B.** Canada, 1914 – 1929

B1. describe some key social, economic, and political events, trends, and developments between 1914 and 1929, and assess their significance for different groups and communities in Canada.

B2. analyze some key interactions within and between different communities in Canada and between Canada and the international community, from 1914 to 1929, and how these interactions affected Canadian society and politics.

B3. explain how various individuals, organizations, and specific social changes between 1914 and 1929 contributed to the development of identities, citizenship, and heritage in Canada.

Grade 10: Canadian History since World War I**Strand C.** Canada, 1929 – 1945

C1. describe some key social, economic, and political events, trends, and developments between 1929 and 1945, and assess their impact on different groups and communities in Canada.

C2. analyze some key interactions within and between different communities in Canada, and between Canada and the international community, from 1929 to 1945, with a focus on key issues that affected these interactions and changes that resulted from them.

C3. explain how various individuals, groups, and events, including some major international events, contributed to the development of identities, citizenship, and heritage in Canada between 1929 and 1945.

3. Lesson Plan

Pre-Lesson Discussion

This lesson focuses on the immigrant communities and experiences as seen through the lens of the theatrical production of Christie Pits. The characters and stories we will explore will look at the immigration experience of various communities that took part in the riot at Christie Pits. We will be taking a look at the shared immigrant experience as well as the lasting impact the Christie Pits Riot had on the city of Toronto and its diverse communities.

Important Note: We encourage teachers to use trauma informed care when conducting this lesson. Immigration stories may bring up traumatic and upsetting feelings for students. The stories the students explore or tell might bring up sensitive topics.

Big questions to discuss:

- Why do people immigrate?
- What makes a community?
- What do you think the immigrant experience looked like in the 1930s in comparison to today?
- How does the immigrant experience impact families?
- How does immigration impact Toronto?

Students can complete a KWL Chart to discuss these questions and reflect on their previous knowledge and lived experience. Students will complete the “know” and “want to know” sections before the activities and will complete the “learned” section following the reflection.

Activity 1 – Immigration and Christie Pits

Materials and technology needed: Computer to explore the Christie Pits website, Christie Pits Immigration worksheet, pen or pencil.

After the initial discussion, students are to explore the following character profiles and associated history pages:

- Rebecca
- Domenico
- Samuel

In the Christie Pits Immigration worksheet, students will be asked to fill out the worksheet based on factors that contributed to each character’s immigrant experience. Students are encouraged to listen to the character profiles and look at the history pages associated with the characters to learn more about the factors that impacted their immigration journeys.

Activity 2 – Primary Source Analysis

Materials and technology needed: Immigration document analysis worksheet, Family document PowerPoint, pen or pencil

Students will be broken up into teams and receive an assigned group of documents. Individually the students will fill out a worksheet about the clues they find in the images and documents.

Family One: Jewish Immigration Experience, Joseph Kalman Wainryb

Family Two: Italian Immigration Experience, Tulio Beghetto

Once students have studied the documents, they will then be asked to write a journal entry from the perspective of this individual. The journal should look at the immigrant experience, the individual's emotions and the changes they went through on their journey. Students should refer to the questions discussed while looking at the family documents and writing their journal entries.

Post-Activity Reflection

After the activities, the class is encouraged to have a discussion that considers the following questions:

- What did you learn about the immigrant experience that was new?
- How has immigration in Canada changed since the 1930s?
- How have the laws changed? How has society changed?
- How did the riot at Christie Pits impact the immigrant experience?

Students are encouraged to reflect on personal experiences, or any stories they may be familiar with.

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Pre-Lesson Discussion

- Discuss what students are currently familiar with related to the theme of immigration.
- This is to be an open and safe space for students to discuss experiences they have heard about, or experiences they may have gone through.
- Students should be encouraged to discuss Toronto as it is today including the benefits and challenges.

Activity 1 – Immigration and Christie Pits

Each character has a unique immigration story as well as history that connects to their stories on the Christie Pits website.

Rebecca

- Arrived at a very young age and had a very difficult immigration experience. Lost her twin sister while waiting to board the ship to Canada.
- Fled Eastern Europe due to the pogroms and violence in the area
- Tried to escape the issues that were occurring in Europe.
- History pages associated with Rebecca: Fear of Communism and Nazism
 - Although Rebecca tried to escape these issues in Europe, they were still very much present in Canada.

Domenico

- His family left Italy for a better life in Canada.
- Have very strong ties to the Jewish community, bonded over their common experiences in the mostly Protestant city of Toronto.
- History pages associated with Domenico: The Immigrant Experience
 - Discusses the shared pain the Italian and Jewish community felt during the 1930s.
 - Although their families were in search of better lives in Canada, the immigrant life was not very easy.

Samuel

- His family left Russia when he was a very small child to escape the persecution they experienced.
- His family's experience led him to be a very quiet and reserved person. He is thankful for the opportunities he has been given because he knows that if his family had stayed in Europe, he wouldn't have been able to have these opportunities.
- History pages associated with Samuel: The Jewish Community, and The Great Depression
 - Discusses the experience the Jewish community went through during the 1930s.



- Many in the Jewish community had similar stories to Samuel, especially due to the violence in Russia, many fled to Canada to find safety.

Activity 2 – Primary Source Analysis

Prompts when looking at the documents:

- Where is the individual coming from?
- Where are they bringing their family from?
- What do we know about the individual? (Age? Education? Marital status?)
- Why might they be coming to Toronto at this time?
- How might these factors impact their immigration experience?

Family One Documents:

Joseph Kalman Wainryb. Sourced from the collections of the Ontario Jewish Archives.

The overall journey: At the age of only 17, Joseph moved from Poland to Canada with the support of his brother-in-law. The voyage was very long and he had to acquire many documents and go through several examinations in order to get accepted into Canada.

Documents included:

1. Joseph's Passport
 - Stamped in 1921
 - His Polish passport, allows him to travel
 - Says that he is Polish
2. Medical Examination Letter
 - Letter written by a Polish doctor confirming that Joseph had received all of his vaccinations and that he did not have any infectious or contagious diseases.
3. Transmigrant certificate
 - Issued by the Canadian Pacific – a company responsible for transporting immigrants to Canada.
 - Ensured that everyone on board received medical observation and that they were medically well and not carrying any infectious diseases.
 - Joseph received this medical observation in Belgium on the 8th of September 1921
4. Letter of Admission into Canada
 - Letter of Admission presented to Joseph Kalman Wainryb at the age of 17.
 - Presented in the City of Toronto by a family member that already resides in Toronto and is a “naturalized British Subject”.



- Claims that Joseph's brother-in-law, Morris Turek will be supporting Joseph in his immigration to Canada.

5. Joseph's landing card

- Joseph's ticket for the SS Scandinavian for 3rd class passage
- The ship belonged to the Canadian Pacific Line from 1917-1923
- Moved between the UK and Canada

Family Two Documents:

Tulio Beghetto: Sourced from Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, Halifax.

Documents included:

1. Letter sent to Tulio Beghetto from the Canadian Visa Office in Rome, 11 May 1948.
 - Confirms that Tulio is able to come in for his medical checkup in order to continue the process to acquire his Canadian visa.
 - Allowed to continue in his application process to move to Canada.
2. Letter sent to Santo Beghetto from the Canadian Department of Mines and Resources, 23 February 1948
 - Tulio's brother, Santo, who worked in Guelph for the Department of Mines and Resources was helping Tulio and his family immigrate to Canada.
 - Letter is advising the family to make settlement arrangements and to begin preparing their documentation to receive a Canadian visa.
3. Application for an Italian passport for Tulio Beghetto, 8 March 1948
 - Letter requesting information regarding Tulio's civil standing in order to receive a work visa to go to Canada.
4. Letter sent to Tulio Beghetto from the Canadian Legation in Rome, 24 April 1948
 - Letter confirms that the letter from his brother was received and with the support of Santo, Tulio and his family are able to proceed with their application to move to Canada.
 - They must now acquire all the necessary documentation within the given time frame.
5. Photograph of Tulio and Rosa Beghetto on board MS Vulcania, March 1948
 - Photograph of Tulio and his wife, Rosa on the MS Vulcania on their way to Canada
 - The MS Vulcania was in operation from 1929–1974
 - The ship once belonged to the Italian government, however after the war, the ship was acquired by the American government.



Post-Activity Reflection

- Immigration has changed considerably since the 1930s
 - As seen from these activities, the immigration process was not easy or quick
 - It was a stressful process that required many documents and steps to get approved and not everyone was successful.
- Immigration laws have changed
 - In the early-1930s, immigration was limited to American-born or British subjects with enough capital to maintain themselves. Few others would be accepted as new immigrants into Canada under the strictest immigration policy in Canadian history, introduced in 1931.
 - It wasn't until new regulations were introduced in 1962 that skill, and not race or national origin, became the determining factor for immigration admission.
 - MS St. Louis – in 1939 a boat from Europe filled with German Jewish refugees arrived in North America as they tried to flee the impending Holocaust, but they were turned away by several countries, including Canada.
- The riot strongly influenced changes in Toronto for immigrants as it led to one of the first anti-hate laws in Canada
 - The banning of the Swastika following the riot is seen by many as the first step towards becoming the multicultural and accepting city Toronto is known as today.

