



Lesson 3: Researching Lost Stories

This lesson builds upon the previous two by asking students to apply their historical thinking skills, as well as their sophisticated understanding of the use of historical markers to commemorate important events or individuals. Specifically, this lesson will challenge students to research a historical marker within their local community, situate it within its larger historical context, and evaluate its effectiveness. This rich task draws upon all of the skills developed in the previous lessons and can be used as a culminating or final activity for this unit.

Lesson 3, Part 1 (Time Dependent Upon the Extent of Research the Teacher Desires): **Introducing the Challenge, Brainstorming, and Researching**

Overview: This lesson gets students to think about historical markers in their local community by asking them to identify as many historical markers as possible from a set created by the teacher. This leads into the issuing of a critical challenge: selecting, researching, and assessing a local historical marker.

A very effective way to introduce this challenge is to present students with images of lesser-known monuments, historic sites, and other historical markers from their local community, including their school (teachers can identify some markers by visiting Parks Canada's list of historic sites: <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/culture/clmhc-hsmbc>; and commemorative plaques: <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/culture/clmhc-hsmbc/ncp-pcn/plaques>). Ideally, these markers would be ones that students see frequently as they travel through their community, but which they may know little about.

Begin by giving students copies of the images (many of these can likely be found on the internet, but teachers may need to photograph some markers themselves) and ask them to work in small groups to “identify the marker”. This should include answering the questions: What is it? Where is it? What person or event does it represent? When was it erected?

Once students have examined all of the images the teacher will ask they class which markers they were able to identify (and check to see that they identified them correctly!). The teacher can then point to any unidentified (or incorrectly identified) markers and suggest that the students' unfamiliarity with these stories suggests they may be in danger of being lost.

The teacher can then introduce this lesson's critical challenge: finding and researching a local marker. The lesson should finish with students brainstorming to create a list of all of the local markers they know. Students should copy down the list, decide which they would like to research, and visit the site if possible for homework.

The teacher starts the next class by ensuring that everyone has selected a marker. Once this is done, students should be given time to research. While the resources needed for this will vary from student to student teachers may wish to examine what resources exist for their local history. Public libraries and archives are often good places to start this process.

Lesson 3, Part 2 (optional): **Visiting a Local Archive**

Overview: This optional field trip provides students with an orientation to an important local source of information for their research project.

While this is optional, taking students to a local archive can greatly enhance their final research projects by alerting students to the wide range of resources they can access through the archive. It is strongly recommended that the teacher visit the archive in advance of a visit to see what resources are available and to discuss the upcoming visit with the archivist or curator. Given enough notice, most archivists and curators are delighted to help locate materials for this sort of project. If going on a field trip is not possible, teachers can explore other possibilities for connecting with local archives, including inviting an archivist or curator to

bring items into the classroom. Teachers can also go to local archives on their own and scan items that may be of use to students.

Lesson 3, Part 3 (Time dependent on number of students): **Sharing of Research**

Overview: During this class students will share their research findings and will be evaluated on their ability to describe, situate, and critique their chosen monument.

Students are given the opportunity to briefly share the findings of their research. While each student's research and talk should be unique, the teacher can encourage them to:

1. Provide a picture of their chosen marker.
2. To explain where they started their research from. This would include, for example, why they were interested in this particular marker and what they knew about it (if anything) before they began their research.
3. To explain what they learned about the individual or event being commemorated. This should include some discussion of the larger historical context.
4. To explain when the marker was created or erected and to discuss what this tells us about that time period. So, for example, the famous Vimy Ridge memorial took 11 years to build and was opened in 1936. Knowing this, students could make inferences about the attitudes of Canadians towards World War I, and the battle of Vimy Ridge, in the immediate post-war period.
5. What "grade" they would assign to the existing historical marker? Why? And, how the monument might be improved.

If teachers plan to grade these presentations it is recommended they co-develop a rubric with students at the start of this lesson. An example of a **historical marker research presentation rubric** can be found on the Lost Stories website.