

Christie Pits
RIOT
90TH COMMEMORATION

Media Representation & Reading Bias
Education Resource: Grades 8 & 10

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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 Bruegggosman. 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. Understand the concept of bias in media;
2. Understand the political and social climate of Toronto in the 1930s;
3. Be able to recognize ways in which bias occurs in the media;
4. 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: Language

1. Developing and Organizing Content

Purpose and Audience 1.1: identify the topic, purpose, and audience for more complex writing form.

Research 1.3: gather information to support ideas for writing, using a variety of strategies and a wide range of print and electronic sources.

Review 1.6: determine whether the ideas and information they have gathered are relevant, appropriate, and sufficiently specific for the purpose, and do more planning and research if necessary.

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.

Grade 10: English

1. Listening to Understand

Analysing Texts 1.7: analyse both simple and complex oral texts, focusing on the ways in which they communicate information, ideas, issues, and themes and influence the listener's/viewer's response.

Critical Literacy 1.8: identify the perspectives and/or biases evident in both simple and complex oral texts and comment on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, and identity.

3. Lesson Plan

Pre-Lesson Discussion

Materials and Technology Needed: A computer, a projector, Reading Bias and Primary Sources slide show (provided).

This lesson will focus on reading bias and how events are presented in the media. Students will learn about the Christie Pits Riot and how different media sources portrayed the event. Using primary sources and newspaper articles written in the days following the event, students will have the opportunity to compare and contrast perspectives and come to conclusions about the accuracy of the presented narratives.

Prior to looking at the sources, have a discussion about bias. Reference the slide show “*Reading bias and primary sources*” and discuss how to properly analyze primary sources. Present key questions that students are encouraged to ask when looking at the sources.

Activity 1 – Primary Source Analysis

Divide students into partners. Provide every duo with one of the newspaper articles (either the Daily Star article, or the Telegram article) and a “primary source analysis” worksheet. After students have completed looking at one of the articles, groups will swap to look at the other article and fill out another “primary source analysis.”

After students have had the opportunity to take a look at both articles, the class is encouraged to have a group discussion about what they observed.

- What did they think about the event after only looking at one primary source?
- How did their opinion change after having the information from both sources?
- Is there any information missing from the articles that might help us better understand the causes and consequences of the event?

Activity 2 – Secondary Research

Materials and Technology Needed: Computer or tablet to interact with the Christie Pits website, notebook or paper, pencil or pen.

Following the discussion, students are asked to engage with the *Christie Pits Riot* website to see what else they are able to learn about the event. Students should be looking for additional information that was not present in the newspaper articles that can help them understand the historical event better.

As the students explore, they are encouraged to take note and write down the information that they notice is significant.

Post-Activity Reflection

After students have had the opportunity to explore the website and learn more about the events of the Christie Pits Riot, the class is encouraged to have a discussion, considering the following questions:

- Whose voices are missing from the primary documents we looked at?
- Why is it important to be critical when reading primary sources?
- What else can we do to make sure that we are getting a complete picture of historical events?