

Christie Pits
RIOT
90TH COMMEMORATION

Protest & Advocacy Through Art
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 importance of advocacy and protest historically and in current times;
2. Analyze local and international issues that have influenced Canada's history;
3. Reflect on issues that are important to them and create art that promotes a call to action and social change;
4. Develop perspectives on issues of civic importance locally and internationally.

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 between 1890 and 1914, including the residential school system, and explain their impact.

Grade 6 to 8 – The Arts

Strand D. Visual Arts

D1. apply the creative process to produce art works in a variety of traditional two- and three-dimensional forms, as well as multimedia art works, that communicate feelings, ideas, and understandings, using elements, principles, and techniques of visual arts as well as current media technologies.

D2. apply the critical analysis process to communicate feelings, ideas, and understandings in response to a variety of art works and art experiences.

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: Civics and Citizenship

Strand C. Civic Engagement & Action

C1. analyze a variety of civic contributions, and ways in which people can contribute to the common good.

C2. assess ways in which people express their perspectives on issues of civic importance and how various perspectives, beliefs, and values are recognized and represented in communities in Canada. **C3.** analyze a civic issue of personal interest and develop a plan of action to address it.

Grade 10: Visual Arts

Strand A: Creating and Presenting

A1. apply the creative process to create a variety of art works, individually and/or collaboratively.

A2. apply elements and principles of design to create art works for the purpose of self-expression and to communicate ideas, information, and/or messages.

A3. produce art works, using a variety of media/materials and traditional and/or emerging technologies, tools, and techniques, and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of ways of presenting their works and the works of others.

3. Lesson Plan

Pre-Lesson Discussion

This lesson focuses on the ideas of protest and advocacy as seen through the lens of the Christie Pits Riot. Students will look at local and global issues, as well as the role we play as active citizens. By assessing the art created about the riot at Christie Pits, students will reflect on issues that are important to them and create art that is inspired by these issues.

Important Note: We encourage teachers to use trauma informed care when conducting this lesson. Protest and advocacy 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 did the Christie Pits riot happen? What were the conditions that led to the riot?
- How did the riot help the Jewish people advocate for themselves?
- Why do people protest?
- How can art be a protest? How can art help advocacy?

Activity 1 – The Riot at Christie Pits Through Art

Materials and technology needed: Computer to explore the Christie Pits website, “Christie Pits and Art” power point.

After the initial discussion, teachers are encouraged to share the “Christie Pits and Art” power point to discuss the connection between advocacy and creating art as explored through the lens of the riot at Christie Pits.

Students are encouraged to interact with the examples of art that was created about the riot and reflect on the questions in the power point.

After viewing the power point, students are encouraged to interact with the Christie Pits website and explore elements of the theatrical performance that was created based on the Christie Pits Riot. It is strongly encouraged for students to watch the interview with the creators of the show, Sam Rosenthal and Drew Carnwath in the *About* section of the website.

Activity 2 – Advocacy through Art

Materials and technology needed: A computer or tablet to research, materials to create the art (paper, markers, pencils, etc.)

After looking at some examples of differing forms of art created about the Christie Pits riot (theatre, graphic novels, visual art), students are encouraged to reflect on issues that are important to them and create art that advocates for education and action to be taken on these issues.

Students are to:

1. Research the issue to learn more about the key points and messages that are connected to the issue.
 - Students should be looking at what significant figures and organizations are saying about these issues, as well as media outlets.
 - Students should keep in mind bias and whose perspective is being told when doing research on their chosen issue.

2. Create a piece of art that advocates for action to be taken on their issue.
 - Their art should encourage further education on the topic, as well as have a call to action.
 - The art could be anything from a story to a song to a work of visual art, or even a play. Creativity is welcome!
 - Their pieces should reflect on the questions that students asked when assessing the examples in the “Christie Pits and Art” power point.
3. Share their art with the class.
 - Students are encouraged to begin a conversation about their issue and share their call to action with the class.

Post-Activity Reflection

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

1. What are some ways you can be an active citizen?
2. What actions should we put in place to keep peace in our city? Our schools? Our communities?
3. What role could you play in challenging racism, antisemitism, and xenophobia in our communities?
4. How could different communities come together to fight against injustice without violence?
5. What makes you proud of your city? Your community?