

## Thoughtbook: Planning a Compelling Story

### Why tell a story?

Storytelling is a powerful way to provide people with information. Storytelling connects information to emotions making that information memorable, meaningful, and understandable. Storytelling also helps people to relate to one another and to connect the lives of different people in society together. Telling a story about the nature of the Pandemic 1918 (Spanish Flu) and how significantly it impacted on the lives of people(s) in Canada will help others learn important lessons about this defining moment in Canada's history.

### How can you best plan your story?

As you work through a variety of lessons on the Pandemic 1918, begin to build your story using a Thoughtbook. Use the Activity sheet: *Storytelling Planning Template* to help you gather useful information and details to include in your story. Every good story has an opening, main body, and closing. Consider how you might use information presented in the lessons through a variety of formats such as tables, charts, images, lyrics, photographs, and texts to gather details to add to each section. Be sure to read the descriptions of an effective opening, main body, and closing to help you sort out the details in a manageable way.

### What makes a story compelling?

Have you ever heard a story that shapes your life in some way? A compelling story becomes a force that moves the people in the audience to some form of action. Stories often compel people to continue thinking about what they learned and usually impact on their lives in some way. To tell a compelling story you must consider how you will deliver your story so that it grabs and holds the attention of your audience even after the story is over. For this, you need to consider innovative ways to use the information you gathered to compel your audience. It is also helpful to think about other qualities that make a story compelling as you gather details in your storytelling planning template. A story is compelling when it is accurate and informative, clear and understandable, engaging and relatable to the audience, and focused on a purpose or theme. Record these qualities in your Thoughtbook so that you think about them as you plan out the details of your story.

### How can any format/medium tell a story?

There are many different ways to tell a story: an interview, a dance, a diary, or even an illustrated map. As you learn about the Pandemic 1918, think about how information is presented in various formats and what format may be best to use for your story given your intended audience. What medium will you use—the arts, technology, a book, or an exhibit? Might you include special effects, music, colour, size and types of font, images, or graphs to enhance your story? For example, if you choose to tell your story in the format of an illustrated map, you might include pictures and information in the form of graphs or tables about the people or groups in your story to illustrate who they are and what life was like for them. You may enlarge or exaggerate parts of the map to highlight the problem or disruption that occurs in your story or other important elements of your

story. You may use colours to highlight how different aspects of peoples' lives changed over time and symbols or icons to highlight important information, indicate a change that has happened (an arrow for example), or create a certain feel for your story. All of these techniques and others can be found on websites like <https://www.digitalartsonline.co.uk/features/illustration/30-brilliant-tips-for-creating-illustrated-maps/#12>.

The pages of your Thoughtbook are designed to give you a place to “play with ideas.” They provide space to “park” ideas around useful information and details for your story that can make it compelling. As you learn more about the Pandemic 1918, you will gather many different ideas for what to include in your story and how to craft it. Not all of the ideas you gather will make it into your final story—but all of them will give you a rich collection of ideas from which to choose.

**Note to teachers:** Students may require additional space to capture, sort, and select ideas.

## Activity sheet: Storytelling Planning Template

Opening	Main Body	Closing
<p><b>Components: An effective opening...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> describes the setting and context (describes place, time-frame, and what Canadian society was like when the story is taking place)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> introduces the people or group(s) of people involved in the story</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> introduces the major problem or disruption that launches the story and makes the audience want to know what is going to happen in response to the problem or disruption</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> clearly connects to the theme (see above)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Components: An effective main body...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> describes how the people or group(s) of people initially react to the problem or disruption</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> introduces the goal(s) that the people or group(s) want to achieve in response to the problem/disruption</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> tells how the people or group(s) of people in the story respond to the problem or disruption over time to achieve their goal(s)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> reveals how the problem or disruption impacts on the lives and character of the people or group(s) in the story</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> provides insights for the audience about the theme</li> </ul>	<p><b>Components: An effective closing...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> describes how the problem or disruption is resolved</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> describes what Canadian society is like after the problem or disruption is resolved (if it has changed and how it has changed)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> summarizes how the major problem impacted on the people or groups involved</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> summarizes insights related to the theme (significance of the impact)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ideas for creating an effective opening:</b></p> <p>Where does your story take place?</p> <p>Over what period of time?</p>	<p><b>Ideas for creating an effective main body:</b></p> <p>How do the people or group(s) in the story first react to the problem/disruption?</p>	<p><b>Ideas for creating an effective closing:</b></p> <p>How do the people/group(s) resolve the problem/disruption?</p>

Activity sheet: Storytelling Planning Template (Cont'd)

<b>Opening</b>	<b>Main Body</b>	<b>Closing</b>
<p><b>Ideas for creating an effective opening:</b>            What is life like in this place over this time period?</p> <p>What people or group(s) are involved in the story?</p> <p>What roles do these people of group(s) play?</p>	<p><b>Ideas for creating an effective main body:</b>            What goal(s) do they want to achieve in response to the problem/disruption?</p> <p>How do the people or group(s) respond to the problem/disruption to achieve their goal(s)?</p>	<p><b>Ideas for creating an effective closing:</b>            How has this resolution changed life in the place and time period of your story?</p> <p>How did the problem/disruption impact on the lives of the people/group(s)?</p>

Activity sheet: Storytelling Planning Template (Cont'd)

Opening	Main Body	Closing
<p><b>Ideas for creating an effective opening:</b>            What happens to create a problem or disruption in the lives of the people or group(s) in the story?</p> <p>What makes this problem/disruption interesting enough to make the audience want to know what is going to happen?</p> <p>How will you introduce the theme of your story?</p>	<p><b>Ideas for creating an effective main body:</b>            How does the problem/disruption impact on the lives and characters of the people or group(s)?</p> <p>How do the responses of the people/group(s) help to develop your story's theme?</p>	<p><b>Ideas for creating an effective closing:</b>            How does the resolution to the problem help to make your story's theme clear and understandable to the audience?</p>