

Title

Juno Beach and the Battle of Normandy: Commemorating Contributions and Sacrifices

Topic

Understanding meaningful commemorations

Subject area/discipline

Interdisciplinary

Grade level

6 to 11

Suggested time

80 minutes

Overarching critical inquiry question

How can we best honour the lives of those who contributed to Juno Beach and the Battle of Normandy?

Overarching critical inquiry task

Design a meaningful digital commemoration to honour the contributions and sacrifices of an individual (from your local community) who contributed to Juno Beach and the Battle of Normandy.

Lesson critical inquiry question

What makes a *meaningful* commemoration?

Lesson critical inquiry task (critical challenge)

Select the most meaningful commemoration.

Central ideas/learning goals

Students will understand the idea of a commemoration and the criteria for making it meaningful. They will assess a series of three sample commemorations using the criteria and then determine which ones are most meaningful.

Related concepts

- commemoration
- storytelling

Key competencies

- framing and/or responding to *powerful* questions
- gathering *appropriate* evidence
- *effectively* evaluating the evidence in light of criteria
- drawing *sound* conclusions consistent with the evidence and criteria
- *collaboratively* working with others to encourage *meaningful* discourse that deepens understanding of the importance of historical events

Lesson overview

In this lesson, students begin to explore what makes something meaningful by deciding on the most meaningful gift for an important family member. They then develop an understanding of what a commemoration is by exploring three examples of commemorations and an example of a memorial. By rating the three examples of commemorations, students construct an understanding of criteria for a meaningful commemoration. Students then explore the power of storytelling as a way to make commemorations more meaningful, using the 7 Sentence Story Structure. They apply the criteria and rate the meaningfulness of a video commemoration about an Indigenous soldier structured using the 7 Sentence Story. Finally, students briefly consider how digital technologies in particular can also be used to make their commemorations more meaningful. At the end of the lesson, students begin thinking about how they will design their commemorations through storytelling using a Thoughtbook.

Materials and preparation required

- Activity sheet: 5 W's + H Chart – Commemoration Examples
- Examples of commemorations
 - Example #1: “Biko” by Peter Gabriel (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luVpsM3YAqw>)
 - Example #2: “Trajan’s Column” (see <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Trajans-Column/media/602191/113859>)
 - Example #3: “Embarkation,” by painter Claude Picard (see <http://www.demelerlespinceaux.umce.ca/collection/visual-arts/50-C5-1987-0035>)
- Image: Wall Memorial
- Activity sheet: Rating Commemorations
- Activity sheet: Rating Commemorations Using Criteria
- Thoughtbook Design Template

Teaching Notes

Launch the learning

1. Ask students to consider what would make the most meaningful gift for an important member of their family: 1. a sweater; 2. a family photo album; or 3. a box of chocolates.
2. Invite students to select the one gift that would be most meaningful (full of meaning) to their family member and to complete the following prompt: “The gift of a ___ would be most meaningful to my (family member) because...”
3. Have students share their choice and reasons for their choice with a partner and then with the class. As students share, explain that something is meaningful if it serves an important and valuable purpose. For example, a sweater may be important to someone because their house is always cold and they don’t have many sweaters; a family photo album may be valuable because it helps keep memories of all the special times spent together.

Build important background knowledge

1. Inform students that in these lessons, they will be working on designing something *meaningful*: a commemoration. Invite students to share what they think a commemoration might be.
2. Share with students the first two examples of commemorations provided below and the information provided for each one in the Activity sheet: *5 W’s + H Chart*. In small teams of two or three, have students identify what these two commemorations have in common. As groups, share their ideas, record them in a list for the class to view.

The following websites provide a sampling of various commemorations students may explore in this lesson. Many others are available online. Choose commemorations that best meet the needs of the learners in your classroom to meet the objectives set out in this lesson.

- **Example #1:** “Biko” by Peter Gabriel (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luVpsM3YAgw>)
- **Example #2:** “Trajan’s Column” (see <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Trajans-Column/media/602191/113859>)
- **Example #3:** “Embarkation”, by painter Claude Picard (see <http://www.demelerlespinceaux.umce.ca/collection/visual-arts/50-C5-1987-0035>)

3. Now introduce the last commemoration example to students. Invite students in their teams to consider what *all three* commemorations have in common. Encourage teams to share what ideas they would add, change, or remove from the initial class list. Possible student responses may include that all commemorations:
 - are about an event in the past, or a person;
 - tell us something important about that event or person;
 - help us understand how the event or person contributed to society or their community;
 - relate a little bit of a story about the event or person in various ways (sculpture, song, video, painting, and monument).

4. Explain to students that a commemoration is different from a memorial. Help students understand the difference by sharing the image of a memorial found in a high school in Toronto, ON (or use an example of a memorial in your own school or local community.) Ask students what they think would need to happen for the memorial to become a commemoration. Provide other examples of memorials in your community, such as statues, tombstones, street names, or the names of buildings such as schools. Ensure that students understand that a memorial helps to preserve the public memory of the individual or event, but on its own does not tell the story of that person or event. By contrast, commemorations—which comes from the Latin word *commemorare* meaning “bring to remembrance”—provide useful details that help to illustrate the importance of the event or person.

Develop understanding of criteria for judgment

1. Invite students to now select the most meaningful commemoration out of the three examples. Remind students that something is meaningful if it serves an important or valuable purpose. Explain that the most meaningful commemoration would be one that serves the important purpose of honouring or preserving the memory of an event or person.

2. Provide students with the Activity sheet: *Rating Commemorations*. Invite students to order the three commemorations from least to most meaningful and provide reasons for each rating. Encourage students, with a partner, to list the considerations they made when making their decisions. Remind them to focus on what they considered, not on which commemoration they chose. If necessary, model this process by sharing a few examples:
 - *I thought about which commemoration gave me the most important information about the event or person, who they were, and what they contributed.*

3. Provide students the following list of criteria for a *meaningful* commemoration:
 - **Purposeful** (fits the purpose of a commemoration)

- **Informative** (provides important details about the event or person and their contributions)
 - **Suitable** (captures the character of the event or person—the risks taken and sacrifices made)
 - **Respectful** (tells why the person would be admired)
 - **Attention-grabbing** (causes the viewer/reader to feel a certain way about the event or person and/or to wonder more about them)
4. Ask students to compare this list of criteria to the list of things they considered. Invite students to share ideas they had included on their list with examples and ask them to provide examples of those they had not thought about. (Where missing provide students concrete examples of each criteria to ensure their understanding).

Apply criteria using a thinking strategy

1. Assign one of the three commemoration examples to each partner team ensuring even distribution. Provide teams with the Activity sheet: *Rating Commemorations Using Criteria*. Invite students to practice using the criteria for a meaningful commemoration by applying it to their assigned commemoration.
2. Ask one team per commemoration to share their assessment while other teams with the same commemoration respectfully add to, or challenge, the ideas shared by the presenting team.
3. Invite students to revisit their ranking of the three commemorations either to change the order or add to their reasons for each ranking.

Consolidation

1. To conclude the lesson, inform students that they will be creating a commemoration to honour an individual who contributed to the landing at Juno Beach and the Battle of Normandy during the Second World War. They will be incorporating storytelling into their commemorations as a powerful way to create a meaningful commemoration. Stories can tell a lot about a person or event; it is a way to honour or preserve a memory in a way that people enjoy and can make the person or event come to life in the reader's mind. Be sure students understand that although they will each create a commemoration, the approach that they themselves take may be different.
2. Provide students with a link to the video about Merv Louks, an Indigenous soldier from the Hiawatha First Nation Reserve (Ojibway), on Rice Lake, ON (see <https://definingmomentscanada.ca/jbc75/normandy/loucks/>.) Invite students to place the video on their rating scale and to defend its placement. Remind them to use the criteria for meaningful commemorations. Inform students that the video was designed using the 7 Sentence Story Structure. Provide students with a copy of the 7 Sentence Story Structure

found on the Defining Moments Canada website (see <https://definingmomentscanada.ca/creating-great-stories/7-sentence-story-structure/>) Help students understand the value of designing their commemorations through storytelling. For example, a story provides important details about an individual's character and the setting by which a character is influenced.

3. Highlight for students that another feature that can help make a commemoration meaningful is the use of digital technologies. Direct students back to the Peter Gabriel Biko music video as an example to show how digital technologies can make a commemoration more attention grabbing and informative. For example, the Biko video's use of both music and visuals may help people understand the story better and may also make people feel inspired to take action.
4. Provide students with the Thoughtbook Design Template. Introduce the template as a helpful tool to support the design of their commemorations.
5. Provide students time to watch the 7 Sentence Story Structure video on the Defining Moments Canada website (<https://definingmomentscanada.ca/creating-great-stories/7-sentence-story-structure/>) and to start recording their initial thoughts about which digital formats they may be interested in using for their own commemorations.

Activity Sheet: 5W’s + H Chart—Commemoration Examples

Use the information provided in this organizer to help you better understand each of the three commemoration examples.

	Example #1: Biko song and music video	Example #2: Trajan Column	Example #3: <i>Embarkation</i>
Who/What is it about?	The brutal beating and murder of anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko by South African police.	The 38-metre column commemorates the Roman emperor Trajan’s victory over the Dacian’s in CE 101-102 and 105-106.	The painting depicts Acadian families being rounded up by British soldiers to be placed on ships and sent away from their homes in Nova Scotia to various parts of North America.
Where is it?	South Africa	Rome	Grand Pre, Nova Scotia
When is it about (past, present or future)?	During the 1970s, when opposition to South Africa’s apartheid regime was gaining support.	The reign of the Roman Emperor Trajan, CE 98-117.	During the period of the Acadian Deportation, 1755-1763
Why was it created?	The song was written to protest the treatment of the black majority in South Africa and to make the world aware of the brutal murder of Steve Biko, who had been leading the	The 38-metre columns was created to commemorate Trajan’s victories. Detailed sculptures show 155 different scenes that wrap around the column covering 190 metres. Trajan himself is shown 58 times heroically	The painting was created to show the hardship and cruelty faced by Acadian families including men, women and children as they were forced from their homes and sent to settlement throughout

	protest against the racist regime.	leading his army to victory.	North America in an attempt to destroy Acadian culture.
How was it presented?	The protest was presented as a song and video written and performed by Peter Gabriel	The story of Trajan's victories was shown in detail in a 38-metre column of sculpted marble. that the column, at the time, would have been brightly painted and placed prominently in the centre of Rome for all to see and be reminded of Emperor Trajan's great victories.	The large painting was created by Acadian artist Claude Picard.

Image: Wall Memorial

Sample image of a wall memorial in a Toronto high school



Activity Sheet: Rating Commemorations

Rate the three examples of commemorations from least to most meaningful (full of meaning) to you. Provide reasons for each of your decisions.

Least meaningful

Most meaningful

		
#1:	#2:	#3:
Reasons:	Reasons:	Reasons:

Conclusion:

The commemoration about...

Is most meaningful to me because...

Activity Sheet: Rating Commemorations Using Criteria

Least meaningful

Most meaningful

#1:	#2:	#3:
Reasons:	Reasons:	Reasons:

Conclusion:

Our team thinks that the commemoration about...

Is most meaningful because...

Criteria for meaningful commemorations:

- **Purposeful** (fits the purpose of a commemoration);
- **Informative** (provides important details about the event or person and their contributions);
- **Suitable** (captures the character of the event or person—the risks taken, and sacrifices made);
- **Respectful** (tells why the person would be admired);
- **Attention-grabbing** (causes the viewer/reader to feel a certain way about the event or person and/or to wonder more them).

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