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# **Constructed Canadiana**

Part 1

**Digital Study Guide**

## Introduction

A customized curriculum guide outlining activities for students and educators accompanies each Canada on Screen digital study guide. Each written guide has specific activities that expand on central ideas explored in the accompanying video.

Focusing on the nature of Canadian identity in film, and media, **Constructed Canadiana Part 1** provides an interactive, and collaborative resource for anyone wishing to develop critical thinking skills in the classroom, and beyond.

## Activity 1: Identity Issues



(**Objective:** To understand the contrast with American and celebrity culture)  
Discuss: In your opinion, what makes Canada not America? Or at least, what makes us Canadian? It is often easier to come up with a list of what we are not than what we are. So begin: (on whiteboard, or in groups)

List 5 things that make us not American:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Now, list 5 things that make us Canadian:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

In cinematic terms, these questions become more obvious.

### Questions:

How do you know you are watching an American film?

How do you know you are watching a Canadian film?

(If we are to create a montage of Canadian stills/clips and American stills/clips mixed together, which images are perceived as quintessentially Canadian and American? Consider the representation of stereotypes, landscapes, celebrity, language, and production values...)

## Activity 2: “I am...”



One of the most popular Canadian TV commercials ever to air in Canada was a beer commercial called, “I am Canadian”. It explored with passion every stereotype known to be Canadian.

Watch the following video and note how many stereotypes are listed:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMxGVfk09IU>

- Are there any stereotypes that could be regarded as offensive? To whom?
- Do you think that this commercial helps to define the Canadian identity?

**Task:** Create a commercial based on what you know to be true about your Community. You could put a school spin on it, a neighborhood spin on it, a gendered spin on it...

Here is a student example:

Resource: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9T18LqsH88>

Title your work, “I am \_\_\_\_\_” in accordance with your focus.

## Activity 3: A look at what makes a film Canadian, eh?



Resource: [http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/cancon/c\\_cdn.htm](http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/cancon/c_cdn.htm)

Resource: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinema\\_of\\_Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinema_of_Canada)

Using the criteria and information from the previous 2 links, explain why the following films should be considered Canadian films, but are not.

*Ghostbusters* is a 1984 American supernatural comedy film directed and produced by Ivan Reitman and written by Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis. The film stars Bill Murray, Aykroyd and Ramis as eccentric parapsychologists who operate a ghost catching business in New York City.

## Activity 4: Why do we want to look so much like Americans? (Except in Quebec)



Read the following article:

Resource: <https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/arts/awardsandfestivals/tiff/theshakyfutureofcanadiancinema/article26225432/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&>

Consider the following three excerpts from the article:

**“The challenge is – bordering the United States, which is a massive cultural machine – to find product that’s going to dance through the raindrops and find those eyeballs, get eyeballs onto a Canadian film as opposed to Avengers, or get them to download a Canadian film when they can download *Hunger Games* or they can be binge-watching *House of Cards*.”** ~ Laurie May, (co-president of Toronto-based Elevation Pictures)

**Question:** How do we get people interested in Canadian Film?

**“The kinds of films that are suffering the most in this world are the kinds of films that Canada is known to make. Straightforward dramas – with a kind of quirky humour with a fairly serious theme, a soft social-action picture that has been the bread and butter of Canadian film and television – those films are not having an easy time of it in this evolving marketplace.”**

~ Noah Cowan, (former TIFF executive who is now executive director of the San Francisco Film Society as of 2017)

**“We’ve learned we cannot beat Hollywood at their own game,”** said Mark Slone, the executive vice-president of theatrical distribution for eOne Films Canada, who took a few minutes out of his pre-TIFF frenzy this week to voice some cautious optimism. **“We’re going to try to serve those parts of the audience that are traditionally less well served by Hollywood.”**

**Question:** What do you think eOne Films Canada has in mind? Who are the audience members who are not served by Hollywood? What do they want? Is this going to be the solutions to Canada’s tenuous film situation?

## Activity 5: Short Story Writing



Write a short story you think is distinctly Canadian.  
What becomes important in making your story undoubtedly Canadian?

Now, write a short story that you feel has a distinctly American influence.  
What becomes important in making your story feel like an American story?

Now, a third story... Write a story that is based on your research about another region of Canada- such as Quebec, Praries, Arctic, Newfoundland/Atlantic provinces, Yukon, West Coast, Newfoundland.

Video Resource:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDO\\_QImkm1g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDO_QImkm1g)

Create storyboards of at least 10 panels for your short story, including an establishing shot, and opening sequence to set the mood. You could also use photography to create the storyboard and use stills.

## Activity 6: Explore what we have to offer: NFB as a start



Choose a short film from the NFB site. (Subscribe to the free CAMPUS link for access to a massive resource.)

Write a review of the film. Here is a link to one of many film review guide sites.

Resource:

<https://www.dailywritingtips.com/7-tips-for-writing-a-film-review/>

Cut a trailer for the film. What would you include? How would you frame it to get the most attention from potential audience members?

Resource:

<http://filmshortage.com/the-art-of-the-trailer/>



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