

Classroom Activity Template

Title: Symbolism in the BC Parliament Buildings

Audience: Social Studies 8, 9, and 10

Big Ideas:

- Collective identity is constructed and can change over time.
- Emerging ideas and ideologies can profoundly influence societies and events.
- Disparities in power alter the balance in relationships between individuals and between societies.

Overview:

Students will learn about symbols and participate in a short lesson on analyzing evidence from symbolism. They will use the BC Parliament Buildings online virtual tour to locate, select, observe, interpret, and analyse historical objects as primary sources from multiple perspectives. There is an option, individually, in partners, or in small groups, to contribute slides about a few of these objects to a live, shared, whole-class slideshow document.

Objectives:

- Students will become more familiar with the BC Parliament Buildings itself and with some of the objects found within it.
- Students will describe, interpret, and analyse symbols.
- Students will become more familiar with slideshow applications (PowerPoint, Slides, Keynote, Canva, etc.).
- Students will practice observing, interpreting, and analysing primary and secondary historical sources.
- Students will practice seeing things from multiple perspectives.
- Students will practice group/partner work, sharing responsibility and developing a plan of action to work together towards a goal (the slideshow).

Activities and Method:

Discussion:

- Whole-class discussion with attached teacher slideshow about symbols and their meaning.
 - Students practice making observations and inferring the meaning of various symbols, both commercial and governmental.

The Tour and Workbook:

- Students visit the [BC Parliament Buildings virtual tour](#), locate objects, and:
 - make observations and provide a physical description of the object;
 - identify symbols within the object; and
 - infer possible meanings of these symbols for British Columbians.
- Note: The teacher can assign specific objects to each group to avoid duplication in the final slideshow or allow students to choose the objects themselves (which might result in multiple slides on the same objects).
- Note: The teacher may consider assigning roles to group members to ensure that all members are contributing and learning:
 - Examples: Tour navigator, Reader/Summarizer, Scribe (in the student workbook), Slideshow expert

Adopting Multiple Historical Perspectives:

- Students then apply the lens of one or several different perspectives to an analysis of the objects from the Parliament Buildings, using the Perspectives-Taking handout.
- This document also includes some optional guiding/discussion/extension questions.
- At this point, the student workbook and the Perspectives-Taking handout can be submitted for assessment. Alternatively, there's an option for a shared, whole-class slideshow document (read on below).

Optional: Shared, Whole-Class Slideshow of "Symbolism in the BC Parliament Buildings"

- As a final optional step, students will access the slideshow document and create one or several object slides (depending on time, energy, ability, etc.). Each slide would follow the following format:
 - Title (name of object);
 - Image of the object with a caption describing its location;
 - Short, point-form description of object;
 - Short, point-form description of symbols in object (Note: students should not use too much text; the goal is to provide few key words and to elaborate on them orally); and
 - ONE example for each object of another perspective on that object and its symbolism.
- There is also a document at the end of the student workbook for a non-slideshow version of this step.

Suggestions for Challenge-Based or Inquiry-Based Learning Extensions:

- Students can extend or enrich this activity by reimagining, possibly through a design thinking process, the symbols of the Legislature so that they are more representative and inclusive of the diversity of perspectives that exist in this province currently.
- Students can learn about similar symbols at their local city hall, police station, or school board office and propose alternatives to them that they present to authorities.

Preparation (by teacher and by students)

- Familiarize yourself with the BC Parliament Buildings virtual tour, available online at: <https://www.leg.bc.ca/visit/virtual-tour>.
- Familiarize yourself with objects found during the tour and highlighted during the lesson.
- Arrange for technology in the classroom so students can access the tour.
- Print off enough copies of the student workbook and the perspectives handouts.
- **Optional:** Create a slideshow document online using Google Slides, Microsoft PowerPoint or others and invite all students as editors of this document.

Suggested Duration of activity: 120 - 180 minutes (1 - 3 lessons)

Suggested Learning Outcomes:

First Peoples Principles of Learning:

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

Core Competencies

- Communication: I communicate clearly and purposefully, using a variety of forms appropriately.
- Creative Thinking: I can think “outside the box” to get innovative ideas and persevere to develop them.
- Critical Thinking and Reflective Thinking: I can ask questions and consider options. I can use my observations, experience, and imagination to draw conclusions and make judgments.

Social Studies Curricular Competencies

- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions.

- Assess the justification for competing historical accounts after investigating points of contention, reliability of sources, and adequacy of evidence.
- Explain and infer different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, or events by considering prevailing norms, values, worldviews, and beliefs.

Materials & Resources:

- Slideshow: Symbolism in the BC Parliament Buildings
- Student Work Booklet
- “Symbolism in the BC Parliament Buildings: Perspectives-Taking” handout
- Evaluation sheet with rubric

Evaluation of activity:

- Students will complete the attached workbook and perspectives-taking handout for assessment according to the attached proficiency scale rubric.
- **Optional:** Students will contribute several slides in small groups to a shared, whole-class slideshow document according to an agreed upon template. The classroom teacher can also use the attached proficiency scale rubric to assess these slides.

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NOTE: *The ideas and opinions expressed in this classroom activity belong to their authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. The Parliamentary Education Office only edits for clarity.*

SYMBOLISM IN THE B.C. PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Evidence Analysis and Perspective



What is symbolism?

★ A symbol is a concrete object that represents an abstract idea

- Symbols are all around us, but how we read and understand them depends on the knowledge, experience, and assumptions that we bring with us.

→ Brainstorm 3 symbols you might see in your everyday life and discuss the meaning of each symbol.

Examples for discussion:



I Do: Observe and Infer



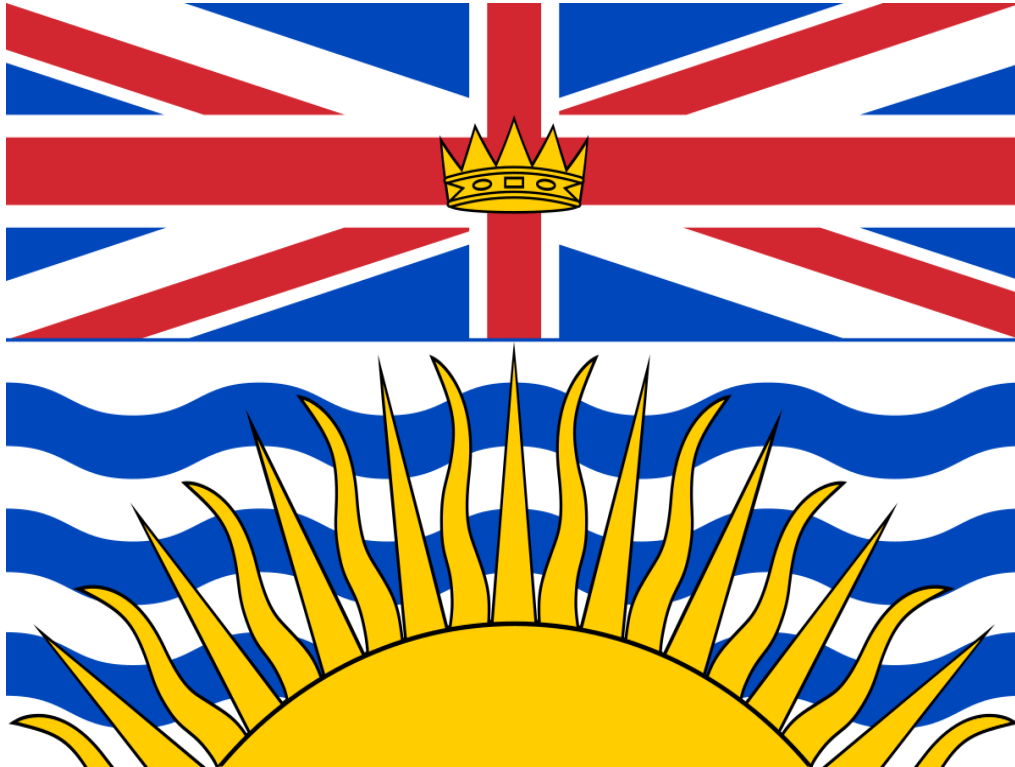
- I observe two colours (red and white)
 - I infer two founding countries (Britain and France)
- I observe a maple leaf (that has 11 points)
 - I infer this is a tree found across Canada

We Do: Observe and Infer



- I observe...
→ I infer...
- I observe...
→ I infer...
- I observe...
→ I infer...

You Do: Observe and Infer



- I observe...
→ I infer...
→ Research says...

- I observe...
→ I infer...
→ Research says...

- I observe...
→ I infer...
→ Research says

Student Exploration Activity (Overview)

For this part of the lesson, each group of students will engage on a treasure hunt of significant objects in the BC Parliament Buildings.

Here in BC... (Student Facing Introductory Slide)

Our province has a number of symbols that are unique and important to us!

The history of these symbols can be traced back to a number of different historical and cultural traditions.

Many come from Indigenous history, others from religious traditions, some from British political history, and others are unique representations of life and environment here in BC.



Use the following link to take a virtual tour of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia in Victoria.

[Virtual Tour | Legislative Assembly of BC](#)

Your group's job will be to explore the grounds and the building of the Legislative Assembly, hunting for a series of symbols. For each symbol, you will answer a few questions.



The Work Booklet: Part 1

Teachers will place students into **five** groups and assign each group a set of **three** images to explore in the Parliament Building Virtual Tour. Below is a sample list, but teachers should feel free to alter the list if they so choose:

1. *The Douglas Obelisk*
2. *The Knowledge Totem Pole*
3. *Orange Shirt Display*
4. *Shxwtitostel*
5. *Captain Vancouver Statue*
6. *Cenotaph*
7. *The Bar of the House*
8. *The Parliament Buildings (#28)*
9. *Queen Elizabeth Golden Jubilee Window*
10. *The Talking Stick*
11. *The Mace*
12. *The Chinese Empress Tree*
13. *BC Coat of Arms*
14. *The Speaker's Chair*
15. *Paintings (#62)*

Students are encouraged to explore and click through the virtual tour at their own pace. However, all images can also be accessed by clicking the “search” button (magnifying glass) at the top left of the virtual tour screen.

All images can be found on the Parliament Building Virtual Tour located here: <https://www.leg.bc.ca/visit/virtual-tour>

The Work Booklet: Part 1

Students will be placed into **five groups** by their teacher. Each group will be assigned **three images** from the list of 15 on the previous slide.

For each of their three assigned images, students will answer the following questions in their Student Work Booklet:

1. *What do you **see** in the image?*
2. *What symbols can you **identify** within the object/image (at least two)?*
3. *For each symbol you identify, **infer** what the symbol might mean to British Columbians?*

Work Booklet: Part 2 (Optional Jigsaw Extension)

Once the student groups are finished with their assigned three images, the teacher will assign them to new groups, where they will work together, sharing information on the different images that they each explored in the first part of this activity.

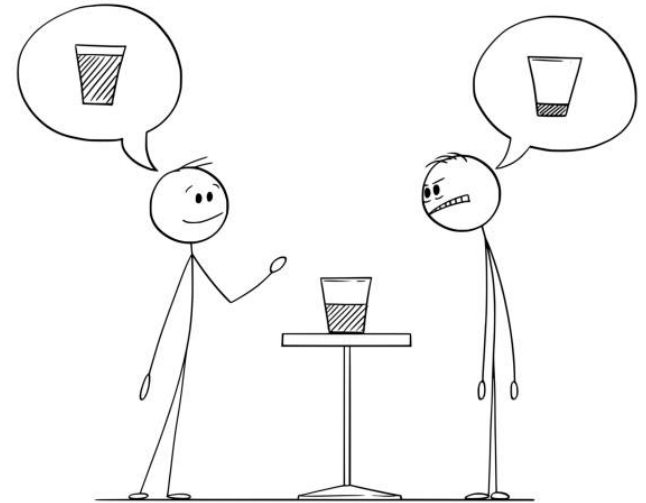
Symbols that students have seen:	Meaning of each symbol to a British Columbian
Queen Victoria Statue (#3 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue? 1) 2)	What meaning do you think each of these symbols has? 1) 2)

There is a plenary activity located on pages 5-8 of the Student Work Packet. In their final groups, students will share what they have explored in the first portion of today's lesson. Group members will take notes on what they hear.

Symbolism in the BC Parliament Buildings: Perspective Taking

Viewing the world from different perspectives helps us to have a more informed, analytical, and compassionate approach to engaging with social and political issues.

Students will be considering how the symbols found in the BC Parliament Buildings might be viewed by people who have different backgrounds.



Perspective Taking: Assignment Instructions

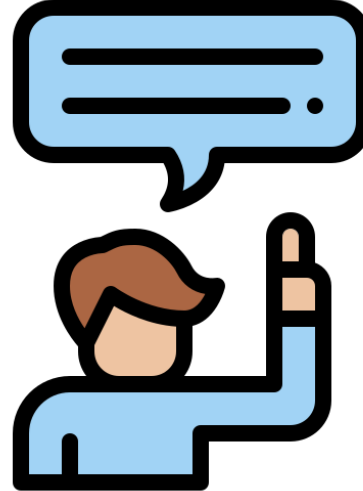
Students will choose two perspectives from the following list to consider in addition to the perspective of an indigenous person.

- New Immigrant from outside the former British Empire
- New Immigrant from the former British Empire
- French-Canadian

For each perspective, students will answer the questions given using a [graphic organizer](#) and must explain their thinking.

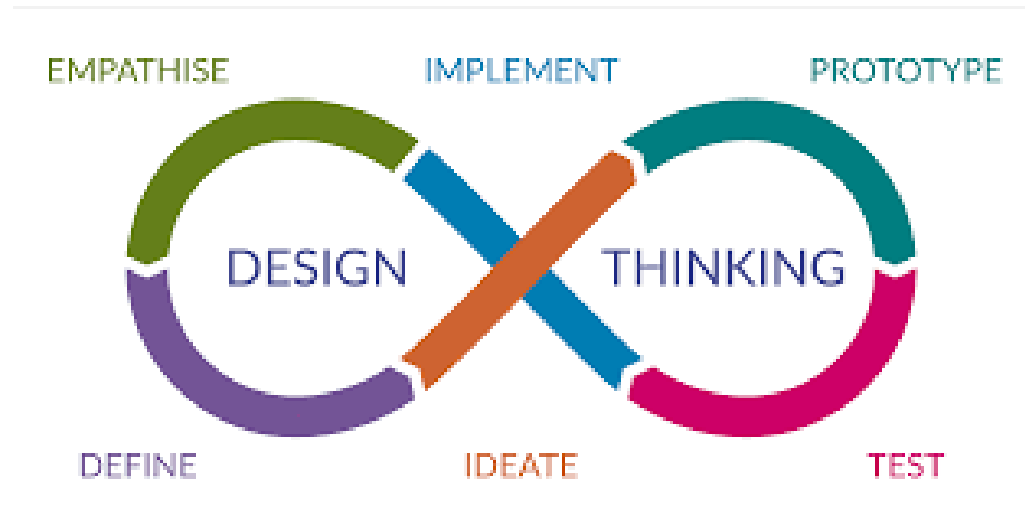
Assessment:

- **Explain** and **infer** different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, or events
- **Identify** and **Assess** Primary and Secondary Sources



Possible Extensions

- Shared, whole-class slideshow to which students could contribute
- Iterative, design-thinking exercise: design a better symbol
- Inquiry-based extension: Identify symbols of your local authorities and propose changes.



Parliament Building Symbols Tour

Student Work Booklet

Your teacher will place you into a group and will assign each group a set of images to explore in the Parliament Building Virtual Tour. Images will be taken from the following list:

All of the below images can be found on the Parliament Building Virtual Tour located here:

<https://www.leg.bc.ca/visit/virtual-tour>

1. The Douglas Obelisk
2. The Knowledge Totem Pole
3. Orange Shirt Display
4. Shxwtitostel
5. Captain Vancouver Statue
6. Cenotaph
7. The Bar of the House
8. The Parliament Buildings (28)
9. Queen Elizabeth Golden Jubilee Window
10. The Talking Stick
11. The Mace
12. The Chinese Empress Tree
13. BC Coat of Arms
14. The Speaker's Chair
15. Paintings (62)

Students are encouraged to explore and click through the virtual tour at their own pace. However, all images can also be accessed by clicking the "search" button (magnifying glass) at the top left of the virtual tour screen.

First Symbol name: _____

1. Look closely at the picture. What do you notice? Make lots of observations.

2. What kinds of symbols can you identify within the image (list at least two!), and what might each of those symbols mean to British Columbians?

First Symbol: _____

I infer this symbol might mean to British Columbians: _____

Second Symbol: _____

I infer this symbol might mean to British Columbians: _____

Third Symbol: _____

I infer this symbol might mean to British Columbians: _____

Second Symbol name: _____

1. Look closely at the picture. What do you notice? Make lots of observations.

2. What kinds of symbols can you identify within the image (list at least two!), and what might each of those symbols mean to British Columbians?

First Symbol: _____

I infer this symbol might mean to British Columbians: _____

Second Symbol: _____

I infer this symbol might mean to British Columbians: _____

Third Symbol: _____

I infer this symbol might mean to British Columbians: _____

Third Symbol name: _____

1. Look closely at the picture. What do you notice? Make lots of observations.

2. What kinds of symbols can you identify within the image (list at least two!), and what might each of those symbols mean to British Columbians?

First Symbol: _____

I infer this symbol might mean to British Columbians: _____

Second Symbol: _____

I infer this symbol might mean to British Columbians: _____

Third Symbol: _____

I infer this symbol might mean to British Columbians: _____

Optional Jigsaw Extension Exercise

Bring it all together:

Once your group has finished working on its assigned (3) symbols, we will come together with students from other groups to share what we have found on our different sets of assigned symbols. Please take notes on what you learn in this new group using the table below:

Symbols that students have seen:	Meaning of each symbol to a British Columbian
<p>Queen Victoria Statue (3 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>
<p>The Douglas Obelisk (4 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>
<p>The Knowledge Totem Pole (5 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>

<p>Orange Shirt Display (15 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>
<p>Shxwtitostel (#15 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>
<p>Captain Vancouver Statue (27 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>
<p>Cenotaph (31 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>

<p>The Bar of the House (42 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>
<p>The Parliament Buildings (28 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>
<p>Queen Elizabeth Golden Jubilee Window (25 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>
<p>The Talking Stick (50 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>

<p>The Mace (48 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>
<p>The Chinese Empress Tree (#29 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>
<p>BC Coat of Arms (14 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>
<p>The Speaker's Chair (51 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>

<p>Paintings (62 on the tour) What symbols were present in this statue?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>	<p>What meaning do you think each of these symbols has?</p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p>
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Symbolism in the BC Parliament Buildings: Perspective Taking

Viewing the world from different perspectives helps us to have a more informed, analytical, and compassionate approach to engaging with social and political issues. You will be considering how the symbols found in the BC Parliament Buildings might be viewed by people with diverse backgrounds. For each symbol you will need to fill in a different table.

- You must choose two perspectives from the following list to consider in addition to the perspective of an Indigenous person.
 - New Immigrant from **outside** the former British Empire
 - New Immigrant from the former British Empire
 - French Canadian
- Fill out the table below for each of the three perspectives.
- For each perspective, answer the questions given, you must **explain your thinking**.

Name/Description of Symbol: _____

Perspectives		What thoughts or feelings might this symbol bring up for someone from this perspective? Why?	Could this symbol mean something different in their culture? If so, what?	Does this symbol carry any unintended messages to someone from this perspective? If so, what might those be?	What might someone from this perspective assume about a government that has this symbol in the building?
<i>Perspective 1</i>	Indigenous Person				

<i>Perspective 2</i>					
<i>Perspective 3</i>					

Possible Extension Questions:

- **Indigenous Person:**
 - Does this symbol acknowledge Indigenous presence, or does it reflect colonial narratives?
 - How might this symbol compare to traditional Indigenous governance symbols?
 - If Indigenous leaders designed a government building, what symbols might they include instead?
- **New Immigrant from Outside the Former British Empire**
 - Does this symbol suggest that Canada values British heritage over other cultures?
 - How might someone from a country with a different governance system interpret this symbol?
 - If more immigrant perspectives were included, what other symbols might be represented?
- **New Immigrant from the Former British Empire**
 - How might this symbol reinforce British political and cultural traditions?
 - Might this symbol evoke pride, indifference, or discomfort based on their experience with British colonial history?
 - If their home country once sought independence from British rule, how might this influence their perception of the symbol?
- **French Canadian Person**
 - How might a French-Canadian view this symbol in relation to their history in Canada?
 - Does this symbol acknowledge French contributions to Canadian governance and culture?

Evaluation: Symbolism in the Legislature

Name: _____

	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Extending
Explain and Infer Different Perspectives on Past or Present People, Places, Issues, or Events	The student can identify a single perspective on a historical or current event but struggles to explain or infer other viewpoints.	The student can identify multiple perspectives and provide basic explanations for each. Inferences about the reasons behind these perspectives are limited or superficial.	The student explains multiple perspectives in detail and makes well-supported inferences about the reasons behind these viewpoints. The explanations are clear and show an understanding of the context.	The student provides a comprehensive analysis of multiple perspectives, including nuanced explanations and inferences. The analysis demonstrates a deep understanding of the historical or current context and the complexity of the issues involved.
Identify and Assess Primary and Secondary Sources	The student can identify primary and secondary sources but has difficulty assessing their relevance or reliability.	The student identifies primary and secondary sources and provides basic assessments of their relevance and reliability. The assessments may lack depth or critical analysis.	The student accurately identifies primary and secondary sources and provides detailed assessments of their relevance and reliability. The assessments are supported by specific examples and critical analysis.	The student provides a thorough and insightful assessment of primary and secondary sources, demonstrating a deep understanding of their relevance, reliability, and potential biases. The assessments are well-supported by evidence and critical thinking.

Teacher Comments: