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| About this Lesson |
| In this lesson, students will write and receive letters from Canadian workers in the 20th and 21st century to explore and compare financial challenges that workers experienced in these periods. |

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| **Grade Level** | **Course(s)/subject(s)** | **Learning Goal(s)** | **Suggested****Timing** |
| 8 | Social Studies, grades 1 to 6 History and Geography, grades 7 and 8 (2013) | At the end of this lesson, students will:* enhance their financial vocabulary
* describe how current events related to finance can affect families (i.e., how globalization affects the finances and financial opportunities of working families)
* describe consequences of financial decisions
 | 70–80 minutes |

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| Curriculum Links |
| Social Studies, grades 1 to 6 History and Geography, grades 7 and 8 (2013) History: Canada, 1890–1914: A Changing Society B1.1 Analyze key similarities and differences in the experiences of various groups and communities in present-day Canada and the same groups in Canada between 1890 and 1914. B1.2 Analyze some of the challenges facing different individual, groups and/or communities in Canada between 1890 and 1914, and compare some of these challenges with those facing present-day Canadians. B1.3 Analyze the actions taken by various groups and/or individuals in Canada between 1890 and 1914 to improve their lives and compare these actions to some of those taken by similar groups today. B2.5 Evaluate evidence and draw conclusions about perspectives of different groups on some significant events, developments and/or issues that affected Canada or Canadians during this period. |

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| Inquiry Question |
| What financial issues and challenges have various groups and communities faced in Canada both past and present, and in what ways and to what extent have people and the government worked to improve these conditions? |

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| Materials List |
| * The Conditions of Canadian Workers in the 20th and 21st Centuries (Appendix A)
* You’ve Got Mail! Letter Writing Template (Appendix B)
* You’ve Got Mail Rubric (Appendix C)
* Citizenship Card – Challenges Facing Canadian Workers (Appendix D), cut-out
* Computer with a data projector to show *Winds of Change: Reforms and Unions* video (McCord Museum in Montreal) available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b46udxbMvqM>
* *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* by Doreen Cronin and Betsy Lewin (2000: Atheneum). Note that this is available online via PBS Kids.
* Empty tissue or shoebox to be used as a “mailbox”
* Envelopes
* Paper for letters
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| **Timing**(Mins.) | **Lesson Sequence** | **Assessment for and as Learning Opportunities** (self/peer/teacher) |
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| MINDS ON |
| 10–15 minutes | WHOLE CLASSVideo Either watch a relevant video (such as *Winds of Change: Reforms and Unions* – approximately 4 minutes) OR read a relevant book (such as *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type*) to the class. In response to the video or reading, ask the students: 1. What are the financial challenges facing workers in the video or story?
2. What are some of the causes of these financial challenges?

What choices must these workers make to improve their financial situation? | Observation |

| **Timing**(Mins.) | **Lesson Sequence** | **Assessment for and as Learning Opportunities** (self/peer/teacher) |
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| MINDS ON (cont’d.) |
|  | Context for Learning* a basic understanding of the situation facing Canadians in the early 1900s
* a basic understanding of the class and racial struggles Canadians faced in the past and still face today
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| ACTION |
| 40–50 minutes | SMALL GROUPSReading response:Distribute The Conditions of Canadian Workers in the 20th and 21st Centuries (Appendix A). Read through the article together. After reading, ask the students to underline one or two lines from the reading that they to which they responded. (**Alternative:** To assist struggling readers, including ELL students, utilize pre-reading strategies and supports recommended in “Think Literacy (2005): Cross-Curricular Approaches, Grades 7-12.”)Starting at one end of the classroom while moving quickly from student to student, have each student read their chosen lines aloud, without commentary. Once everyone has had a chance to participate, discuss: 1. What lines were repeated?
2. Why do you think that is?
3. What themes or ideas seemed to jump out?
 | Observations/Anecdotal Notes |
|  | INDIVIDUALActivity: You’ve got mail! Students will write a letter from the perspective of a present-day worker in Canada describing the financial challenges they face.  | Writing Assessment (Appendix B)Use Rubric (Appendix C) |

| **Timing**(Mins.) | **Lesson Sequence** | **Assessment for and as Learning Opportunities** (self/peer/teacher) |
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| ACTION (cont’d.) |
|  | After writing the letters, the students will trade letters with another student in the class. Students will then write a response to their classmates’ letters from the perspective of an early 20th century worker. In this responding letter, the students will focus on making connections between the situations a worker would face in the past and the current reality. Distribute copies of the You’ve Got Mail!” Letter Writing Template (Appendix B) and one envelope to each student. Explain to students that they will be writing a short letter from the perspective of a Canadian worker today. Instruct students to include the following points in their letter: * the financial challenges they face, and
* the actions (or lack of actions) they are taking to overcome these challenges.

Before writing, explain the parts of a letter as indicated on the template (Appendix B). Invite students to create a character including a name, occupation, family status, etc. Remind students to put their real name in the top right corner of their letter. Set up a “mailbox” at your desk (this can be an empty tissue box, shoebox, etc.). Direct students to place their completed letters into their envelope and put it in the mailbox. |  |
|  | PAIRS/SMALL GROUPSOnce all letters are in the mailbox, redistribute them among the class (students should not receive their own letter). Ask students to read the letter they received and write a response from the perspective of a Canadian worker in the 20th century during Canada’s industrialization. Ask students to read the letter they received and write a response from the perspective of a Canadian worker in the 20th century during Canada’s industrialization. | Written letter using the template in Appendix B and accompanying rubric. |

| **Timing**(Mins.) | **Lesson Sequence** | **Assessment for and as Learning Opportunities** (self/peer/teacher) |
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| ACTION (cont’d.) |
|  | Remind students to include: * the financial challenges they are facing,
* the actions they are taking to improve their lives, and
* why their experience during industrialization in the 20th century can help the worker they are responding to in the 21st century.

Invite students to create a new character for this time period. Remind them to put their real name in the top right corner of their letter. Students should write the second letter on a new piece of paper. |  |
| CONSOLIDATION/DEBRIEF |
| 10–15 minutes | PAIRS/SMALL GROUPLetter reading and reflection When students finish writing their responses, ask them to put it into the envelope of the original letter and give it back to the classmate they responded to. Give students time to read the response to their letter independently. Using the critical questions in Appendix A as a guide, make connections among issues and their depictions in the letters they wrote and received. Collect each envelope (containing two letters) and distribute the Citizenship Cards (Appendix D) to each student, inviting them to place it in their wallet.Check for understanding Discuss the following questions as a class: 1. According to the article, are the financial challenges facing female workers the same as those facing male workers?
2. According to the article, are the financial challenges facing visible minorities the same as those facing White Canadians?

According to the article, are the financial challenges facing recent immigrants the same as those facing Canadian-born citizens? |  |

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| The Conditions of Canadian Workers |
| “The Condition of Canadian Workers: Early 20th Century” Canada’s industrialization (1880–1914) brought about great increases in productivity. However, this rapid economic development did not benefit all social classes equally. As businesses grew prosperous, their employees (workers) did not fare as well. Poor, unsafe working conditions and unfair practices resulted in the deaths of thousands of workers every year. Conditions included long working hours (10- to 12-hour days, 6 days a week) and fines for talking or late arrival. The latter measure encouraged workers to arrive early and stay late because the employer’s clock was, in some cases, set and reset to benefit the employer’s bottom line. Workers could be fired or laid off whenever it suited the employer. Living conditions for working class families were harsh. A family of five often lived on one floor of a house, sharing one or two rooms. Toilets were often located at the back of the house near the water supply, which meant that cholera, typhoid and diphtheria were common among working-class families. With the advent of the streetcar and the automobile, wealthier families, as well as churches and social clubs, moved out of urban centres to the clean air and open spaces of the suburbs. Few working-class families could afford to eat well and most ate only potatoes, bread, oatmeal and milk. In 1901, the cost of living was about $13.38 per week in urban areas, but the average male worker made only $8.25 per week. This situation necessitated that children enter the workforce to help their families survive. These young boys and girls received lower pay, and faced the same dangerous working conditions as adult workers. Married women, who rarely returned to the workforce after marriage, often supplemented the families’ income by taking in boarders, working as part-time seamstresses and offering laundry services. The influx of workers to urban areas, a lack of government labour regulations and unfair employer work practices created a low standard of living which eventually gave rise to the modern union movement. To counter the impoverishing financial effects of an unregulated market economy, workers joined together to form unions. Leaders of unions would bargain with employers to develop worker-friendly legislation and social assistance (e.g., employment insurance, housing, minimum wages, etc.). In early 20th century Canada, workers went on strike in increasing numbers to demand better pay, improved working conditions, the abolishment of child labour, a minimum wage, and shorter working hours (the Winnipeg general strike of 1919 is a well-known example). Together with social reformers, unions helped to elect pro-labour representatives to Parliament and continued to advocate for labour reform in the media and through direct action (striking) throughout the early 20th century. |

**APPENDIX A**

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| The Conditions of Canadian Workers (cont’d.) |
| During the Second World War (1939–1945), labour unions in Canada grew significantly. Between 1940 and 1945, union membership doubled, until 700,000 workers were in a union. In response to a wave of strikes during the Second World War and after years of labour agitation and education, the federal government recognized the right of workers in certain industries to join unions and bargain collectively. In 1940, the federal government, under the control of the Liberal leader, William Lyon Mackenzie King, created an unemployment insurance plan, partly to stave off the more labour-friendly political party, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) (which later became the New Democratic Party, or NDP). The federal Medical Care Act of 1966 followed the example set by the governments of Saskatchewan and Alberta by providing financial support for provincial Medicare programs that were universal, comprehensive and publically administered. “The Condition of Canadian Workers: Early 21st Century” Trade agreements between countries, combined with rapid technological advancements, have created new challenges for workers. Consumer goods can be produced much more cheaply and production efficiency has greatly improved. With the signing of free trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), companies can more easily relocate their production facilities from high wage countries (e.g., Canada) to lower wage countries (e.g., Mexico, China, Indonesia) in order to cut their labour costs. These countries often have lower environmental production regulations and some allow the hiring of child workers, further reducing production costs. Since companies can now easily relocate to other areas, Canadian workers are increasingly facing competition from workers all over the world. The ability of companies to relocate also dissuades workers from joining unions. Canadian workers who face this tough global competition have entered an era of job insecurity, lower benefits and lower pay. Many Canadian workers are increasingly able to find only contract or part-time work instead of full-time work. Pension coverage for workers has also fallen as companies have cut benefits. Many are concerned that instead of increasing financial well-being, these conditions will result in lower living standards for Canadian working families. As governments face increased debt as a result of recent economic crises, pressure to lay off public workers and/or decrease their pay and benefits has intensified. Governments are also confronted with the need to reduce their expenditures on social programs (e.g., health, education, welfare, etc.) in order to pay down their debts. Also, according to the federal government, the majority of future jobs will require post-secondary education. However, not all jobs may require the level and knowledge of skills that workers have spent so much to obtain. In closing, the constant change and increased competition emblematic of this era of globalization have created an environment of insecurity and financial challenges for 21st century workers. |

**APPENDIX A**

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| The Conditions of Canadian Workers (cont’d.) |
| Glossary *Employment insurance*: A government program that provides temporary financial assistance to unemployed Canadians who have lost their job through no fault of their own, while they look for work or upgrade their skills.*Cholera*: A bacterial infection transmitted by contaminated food and water. Symptoms include diarrhea, vomiting and severe dehydration. *Typhoid*: A serious infection caused by Salmonella typhosa ingested with food or water. *Diphtheria*: An acute infectious disease caused by the bacillus Corynebacteriumdiphtheriae. The disease causes difficulty in breathing, high fever and weakness. The toxin is particularly harmful to the tissues of the heart and central nervous system. *Unregulated market economy*: An economy that operates by voluntary exchange in a free market and is not planned or controlled by a central authority; a capitalistic economy with little government interference. *Labour agitation*: Acts by labour organization (unions) that attempt to stir up public opinion for laws that benefit workers. *Medicare*: A government sponsored health care program that provides health care for all Canadian citizens. *Globalization*: A process in which countries become more economically, politically and culturally integrated. This process is aided through technological inventions (e.g., information technologies, airplanes, containerization, etc.) and trade agreements. *Free trade agreements*: Trade agreements that lower tariffs and assist the movement of goods across borders. *North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)*: A free trade agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico. |

**APPENDIX A**

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| The Conditions of Canadian Workers (cont’d.) |
| Discussion Questions 1. What financial problems did Canadian workers face in the 20th century?

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\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_1. What are the benefits of the financial decisions made by governments (e.g., free trade agreements such as NAFTA) that contribute to globalization?

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**APPENDIX A**

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| You’ve Got Mail! – Letter Writing Template |
|  Date: Day, Month, Year\_\_  Salutation: (Dear, To) , Introduce the purpose of writing the letter.   Develop your main points.     Finish with a concluding sentence.       Closing: (Sincerely, Yours sincerely) , Your name  |

**APPENDIX B**

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| You’ve Got Mail! Rubric |
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| Category | Level 1(50%–59%) | Level 2(60%–69%) | Level 3(70%–79%) | Level 4(80%–100%) |
| Knowledge and Understanding |
| Knowledge of financial challenges facing Canadian workers in the 20th and 21st centuries. | Demonstrates limited knowledge of content. | Demonstrates some knowledge of content. | Demonstrates considerable knowledge of content. | Demonstrates thorough knowledge of content. |
| Thinking |
| Use of critical/creative thinking processes in both letters. | Uses critical/creative thinking skills with limited effectiveness. | Uses critical/creative thinking skills with some effectiveness. | Uses critical/creative thinking skills with considerable effectiveness. | Uses critical/creative thinking skills with a high degree of effectiveness. |
| Communication |
| Expression and organization of ideas and information in both letters. | Expresses and organizes ideas and information with limited effectiveness. | Expresses and organizes ideas and information with some effectiveness. | Expresses and organizes ideas and information with considerable effectiveness. | Expresses and organizes ideas and information with a high degree of effectiveness. |
| Application |
| Making connections within and between challenges faced by 20th and 21st century Canadian workers. | Makes connections within and between contexts with limited effectiveness. | Makes connections within and between contexts with some effectiveness. | Makes connections within and between contexts with some effectiveness. | Makes connections within and between contexts with a high degree of effectiveness. |

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Mark: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Parent initials: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

**APPENDIX C**