



TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE  
FOR GRADES 5–12

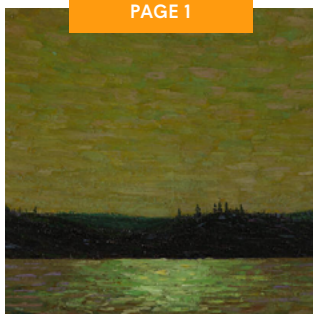
LEARN ABOUT  
**MODERN CANADIAN  
LANDSCAPES &  
THE GROUP OF SEVEN**  
*through the art of*  
**TOM THOMSON**

**ART CANADA INSTITUTE** | **INSTITUT DE L'ART CANADIEN**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE 1



### RESOURCE OVERVIEW

PAGE 2



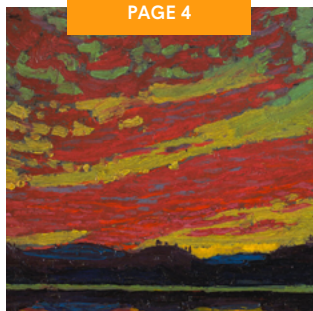
### WHO WAS TOM THOMSON?

PAGE 3



### TIMELINE OF HISTORICAL EVENTS & ARTIST'S LIFE

PAGE 4



### LEARNING ACTIVITIES

PAGE 9



### CULMINATING TASK

PAGE 12



### HOW TOM THOMSON MADE ART: STYLE & TECHNIQUE

PAGE 13



### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

READ ONLINE



### TOM THOMSON: LIFE & WORK BY DAVID P. SILCOX

DOWNLOAD



### TOM THOMSON IMAGE FILE

## RESOURCE OVERVIEW

*This teacher resource guide has been designed to complement the Art Canada Institute online art book [Tom Thomson: Life & Work](#) by David P. Silcox. The artworks within this guide and images required for the learning activities and culminating task can be found in the [Tom Thomson Image File](#) provided.*

Tom Thomson (1877–1917) is one of Canada's most famous artists: his landscape paintings of northern Ontario have become iconic artworks, well-known throughout the country and a critical touchstone for Canadian artists. Thomson was passionate about the outdoors, and he was committed to experimenting with new ways to paint landscape. He had several friends who shared these interests, such as A.Y. Jackson (1882–1974), Lawren Harris (1885–1970), and J.E.H. MacDonald (1873–1932); a few years after his premature death, these friends helped establish the Group of Seven, a collection of artists often credited with transforming Canadian art by creating modern depictions of national landscapes. This guide explores Thomson's considerable legacy and the early history of the Group of Seven by examining art practice, style, and critical issues.

### Curriculum Connections

- Grades 5–12 Visual Arts
- Grade 6 Social Studies
- Grade 10 Canadian and World Studies

### Themes

- Canadian identity
- Group of Seven
- Lands and landscape
- Nationalism
- Painting

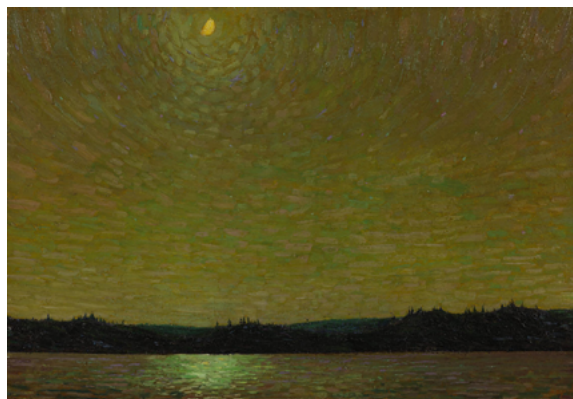


Fig 1. Tom Thomson, *Moonlight*, 1913–14. In 1914, when the National Gallery of Canada purchased this painting (their first work by Thomson), Thomson's friend Lawren Harris was a board member and adviser to the Gallery.

### Teaching Exercises

The teaching exercises in this guide introduce students to

Tom Thomson's achievements in painting outdoors and developing modern Canadian landscape painting, and they challenge students to reflect on the limitations in works by Thomson and the Group of Seven.

- Learning Activity #1: Painting sketches outdoors ([page 4](#))
- Learning Activity #2: Tom Thomson and a new vision for Canadian art ([page 6](#))
- Culminating Task: Reflect critically on Thomson and the Group of Seven: retell-relate-reflect ([page 9](#))

### A Note on Using This Guide

Tom Thomson's paintings have become famous for their views of the Canadian landscape, but teachers should be aware that the worldview at the heart of the artist's work was a colonial and privileged one. Thomson and the artists of the Group of Seven are most famous for empty landscapes, paintings that fail to acknowledge the presence of people in Canada. It is essential to recognize and honour the presence of Indigenous peoples in this land, and the culminating task in this guide is designed to raise this topic with students (background knowledge in colonialism and Indigenous history is helpful).

In discussing Thomson, educators should also be aware that Thomson drowned, and people have considered different possible explanations for his death, including murder and suicide. This guide does not address these aspects of Thomson's life, but they are discussed in [Tom Thomson: Life & Work](#).

## WHO WAS TOM THOMSON?



Fig 2. Studio portrait of Tom Thomson as a successful young commercial artist, c.1910.

**Thomas John Thomson was born in Claremont, Ontario, in 1877**, the sixth of ten children. When Thomson was two months old, his parents moved the family to a farm in Leith, Ontario, near Owen Sound, an important port on Georgian Bay. Growing up, Thomson was exposed to his father's favourite pastimes, hunting and fishing, and he learned to observe and appreciate nature.

**As a young adult**, Thomson was impatient and moved around frequently. He followed his oldest brother, George, to Seattle, Washington, where in 1902 he was hired as a pen artist, draftsman, and etcher at the engraving firm Maring & Ladd. Thomson returned to Leith in 1904, and the following year he moved to Toronto. In 1909 he joined Toronto's leading commercial art firm, Grip Limited. There he met the future [Group of Seven](#) member J.E.H. MacDonald (1873–1932), the senior artist at Grip; within a few years, Arthur Lismer (1885–1969), Fred Varley (1881–1969), and Franklin Carmichael (1890–1945),

all future Group members, had also joined Grip. Thomson met Lawren Harris (1885–1970), one of the Group's leaders, through MacDonald.

**In 1912 Thomson bought** an oil-sketching kit and went on his first canoe trip in Algonquin Park. The same year he also began to make the transition from commercial artist to full-time painter. Through MacDonald, Thomson met his patron Dr. James MacCallum, a Toronto-based ophthalmologist who was passionate about landscape art. MacCallum supported Thomson financially, and he introduced him to A.Y. Jackson (1882–1974), a painter from Montreal who was also interested in creating modern Canadian landscape paintings.

**Thomson began to divide his time** between painting in Georgian Bay and Algonquin Park during the spring, summer, and fall and returning to Toronto for the winter months. Encouraged by MacDonald, Harris, and MacCallum, Thomson increased his output. He completed ten major paintings during the winter of 1916–17, including two of his most well-known works: *The West Wind*, 1916–17, and *The Jack Pine*, 1916–17.

**On July 8, 1917, Thomson drowned** in Canoe Lake in Algonquin Park. Despite his early death, Thomson's short career was marked by a flurry of activity resulting in around four hundred oil sketches and nearly fifty canvases. Today, Thomson is widely regarded as an iconic figure in Canadian art and a key figure in the creation of the Group of Seven, even though he died before the Group was formed.



Fig 3. Tom Thomson, *Hot Summer Moonlight*, 1915. Thomson painted this work while in Algonquin Park, most likely while sitting in his canoe.



Fig 4. Tom Thomson, *The West Wind*, 1916–17. Isolated and twisted, this pine tree has clearly struggled to grow; it can be seen as a symbol of strength and perseverance.



Fig 5. Tom Thomson, *Path behind Mowat Lodge*, 1917. This work is a painting on a wooden panel, a type of support that Thomson used many times.



Fig 6. Tom Thomson, *Decorative Panel (IV)*, 1915–16. In 1915 Thomson began working on a set of decorative panels for the cottage of his patron, Dr. James MacCallum. The first set he created included this painting; because the set did not quite fit, it was not installed at the cottage.



## NATIONAL &amp; WORLD EVENTS

## TOM THOMSON'S LIFE



Fig 7. Members of the Group of Seven at the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto in 1920.

Algonquin Park is founded. The new park is intended to protect the forest, but some logging in the park is permitted as well.

1877 . . . . . Thomas John Thomson is born in Claremont, Ontario, a small farming community outside Toronto.



Fig 10. The Thomson children, c.1887. *From left to right:* Henry, Tom, Elizabeth, Minnie, Fraser, George, Margaret, Ralph, Louise.

1893

1902 . . . . . Thomson is hired as a pen artist, draftsman, and etcher at the engraving firm Maring & Ladd.

1905 . . . . .

Thomson moves to Toronto.

1908

Thomson gets a job at Grip Limited, where he meets J.E.H. MacDonald and other future Group of Seven members.

1909

Thomson goes on his first canoe trip in Algonquin Park.

1912 . . . . .

1913

Thomson sells his *Northern Lake*, 1912–13, to the Government of Ontario—his first sale.

1914

Thomson becomes a full-time painter with the support of his patron, Dr. James MacCallum.

1916

In the early autumn, Thomson paints in Algonquin Park with A.Y. Jackson, Arthur Lismer, and Fred Varley.

1917

1918

In the spring, Thomson takes a canoe trip with Lawren Harris and MacCallum. Later that year, he begins two of his most important works: *The West Wind*, 1916–17, and *The Jack Pine*, 1916–17.

1920

Thomson drowns in Canoe Lake, Algonquin Park.



Fig 11. Tom Thomson, *Northern Lake*, 1912–13. The sale of this painting encouraged Thomson to focus on his art.



Fig 12. Tom Thomson in a canoe he painted dove grey, 1912.



Fig 8. A.Y. Jackson, *A Copse, Evening*, 1918. During the war, Jackson served as a war artist; this work depicts a battlefield.



Fig 9. *Group of 7: Catalogue Exhibition of Paintings: May 7–May 27, 1920.*

The Arts and Letters Club of Toronto, an important meeting place for Thomson and future members of the Group of Seven, is founded.

Lawren Harris and Dr. James MacCallum begin building the Studio Building in Toronto. Thomson and A.Y. Jackson move in in January 1914, but the following year Thomson moves into a shed behind the main building.

The First World War begins (Jackson, Fred Varley, and Lawren Harris enlist).

The First World War ends. Over 60,000 Canadians have died in the war and 172,000 have been wounded. In the face of such devastating loss, Canada is fundamentally changed. Though the country remains part of the British Empire, Canada is given greater autonomy and Canadians are faced with new questions about Canadian identity.

The Group of Seven is formed and holds its first exhibition.

## LEARNING ACTIVITY #1

## PAINTING SKETCHES OUTDOORS

Tom Thomson and members of the [Group of Seven](#) drew inspiration from their visits to northern Ontario and became deeply committed to painting landscapes there; for Thomson, Algonquin Park was extremely important. These artists would often paint small sketches outdoors to capture an impression of what they saw, a practice known as *plein air* (French for “outdoors”) sketching. This practice was significant because at that time many thought art was made only within the walls of a studio. In this activity, students will explore *plein air* sketching by going outside to draw and paint in watercolours, and they will experience and reflect on the challenges associated with this approach to sketching.

## Big Idea

*Plein air* painting

## Learning Goals

1. I can explain the *plein air* painting process, which was a key part of the artistic practices of Tom Thomson and members of the Group of Seven.
2. I can identify the challenges associated with *plein air* painting.
3. I can create a larger work from a small sketch and describe the challenges associated with this process.

## Materials

- Canvases for creating finished works in acrylics
- Clipboards or drawing boards
- Containers for water
- Paintbrushes for watercolours and for acrylics
- Paints (watercolour to use outside and acrylic to use inside)
- Pencils, pencil sharpeners, erasers
- Small paper for sketching outdoors
- [Tom Thomson Image File](#)
- Watercolour paper
- “Who Was Tom Thomson?” biographic information sheet ([page 2](#))

## Process

1. Tell the students that they will be going outside to do some pencil sketches in nature. Have them write a list of what they will need to bring with them (e.g., pencil, sharpener, paper, hard surface to draw on, clips to hold the paper down, erasers).
2. Take students outside to sketch for twenty minutes. Encourage them to focus on big shapes and drawing from background to foreground (this process imitates how an oil painter would typically work). Emphasize that they are creating working drawings to discuss, not formal works.

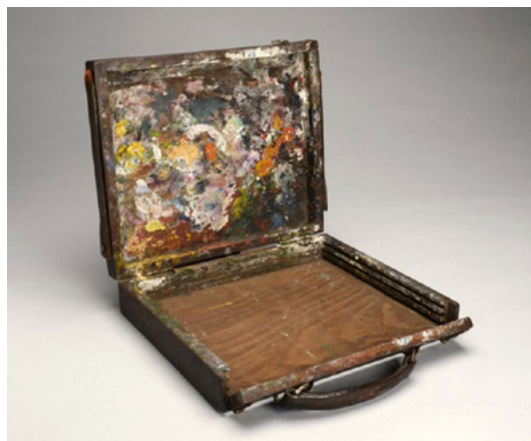


Fig 13. Tom Thomson's sketch box was designed to be easy to use outdoors: he could set it up on his lap and paint anywhere he wished; the box also kept paintings safe while he was travelling.



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*Learning Activity #1 Continued*

3. Return to class and lead a discussion about the *plein air* experience. Some guiding questions include the following:

- How is drawing outside different from drawing indoors?
- Could drawing from a photograph substitute for drawing in nature?
- What were some of the challenges I encountered and how did I overcome them?
- What materials will be ideal to use in this environment? What materials would be more challenging to use in this environment?

4. Introduce students to Tom Thomson using the biographic information sheet ([page 2](#)). Have students brainstorm about what Thomson needed to bring with him in order to go painting in Algonquin Park for a day. Show students images of Tom Thomson's sketch box and the painter in his canoe (see the [Tom Thomson Image File](#)).

5. Have students work in small groups to brainstorm responses to the following questions:

- What are the challenges involved in being a *plein air* artist? (E.g., encountering an animal, sharpening pencils, finding a spot to set up an easel, rain, etc.)
- What is the advantage to overcoming these challenges and working outdoors?

6. Show students Tom Thomson's *Blue Lake: Sketch for "In the Northland,"* 1915, and *In the Northland*, 1915–16, and explain that Thomson sometimes used his sketches to create larger works of art—but he only did this rarely, perhaps because he was concerned that something would be lost. Have students identify notable differences between the sketch and the final painting. Ask them if they think anything they see in this sketch was lost in the final painting.

7. Take students outside to create sketches in watercolour for twenty minutes. Have them write a list of what they will need to bring with them this time (e.g., brushes, watercolour paper, boards and clips, paints, water).

8. Once back inside, give students time to develop their own sketches into larger artworks that they paint in acrylics and to write artist statements about their experiences in working from their sketches.



Fig 14. Tom Thomson, *Blue Lake: Sketch for "In the Northland,"* 1915. In the sketch for *In the Northland*, we can see rough brushstrokes and a limited colour palette.



Fig 15. Tom Thomson, *In the Northland*, 1915–16. This work is a large painting based on one of Thomson's oil sketches.

## LEARNING ACTIVITY #2

## TOM THOMSON AND A NEW VISION FOR CANADIAN ART

While Tom Thomson was not a member of the Group of Seven, his work has become entwined with the Group's legacy. In his brief career, Thomson created artworks that the Group of Seven believed embodied its goals for Canadian art: he created a new form of landscape, one that was modern in style and celebrated northern lands in Canada. In this activity students will investigate Thomson's work with a view to identifying its major themes and its legacy for Canadian artists.

## Big Idea

Modern Canadian landscapes

## Learning Goals

1. I can use my critical thinking and creative skills to analyze an artwork.
2. I can explain major themes in Tom Thomson's work and discuss his work using the elements and principles of design.
3. I can discuss Tom Thomson's relationship to the Group of Seven.

## Materials

- Chart paper
- Markers
- [Tom Thomson Image File](#)
- [Tom Thomson: Life & Work](#)
- "Who Was Tom Thomson?" biographic information sheet ([page 2](#))

## Process

1. Introduce students to Tom Thomson using the biographic information sheet and emphasize that although Thomson's artworks are closely associated with the Group of Seven, Thomson was not technically a member. Group of Seven member Lawren Harris wrote that "I have included Tom Thomson as a working member, although the name of the Group did not originate until after his death. Tom Thomson was, nevertheless, as vital to the movement, as much a part of its formation and development as any other member." (See Harris, *The Story of the Group of Seven* [Toronto: Rous and Mann Press, 1964], 7.) Thomson's work was very important to the Group: as David P. Silcox explains, "In paintings such as *Early Snow*, 1915–16, Thomson had fulfilled the dreams of Harris, MacDonald, and their colleagues by helping them chart a path toward their goal of a Canadian national school of art."



Fig 16. Tom Thomson, *Early Snow*, 1916–17. This work is a striking wintry landscape.



Learning Activity #2 Continued

2. Tell students that they will be investigating Thomson's work with a view to identifying his style and answering the question, "What lessons did Tom Thomson's work offer Canadian artists?" Project *Early Snow*, 1916–17, and discuss this work using the following guiding questions (at this point, it is helpful to have visual aids of the elements and principles of art and design to guide a strong visual analysis):

- What is striking about the composition of this painting?
- What is interesting about Thomson's use of colour?
- How has Thomson used paint here?
- What might this work suggest about Canada?

3. Divide students into groups and provide each group with a copy of one of the following works by Thomson.

- *Northern River*, 1914–15
- *Sunset*, 1915
- *Approaching Snowstorm*, 1915
- *Opulent October*, 1915–16
- *Nocturne: Forest Spires*, 1916
- *The West Wind*, 1916–17



Fig 17. Tom Thomson, *Northern River*, 1914–15. A scene in Algonquin Park, this painting does not represent a particularly special location – it is distinctive because of Thomson's viewpoint and composition.

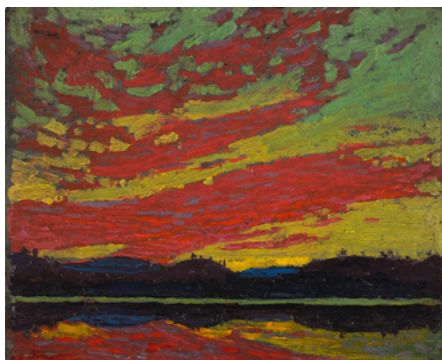


Fig 18. Tom Thomson, *Sunset*, 1915. In many of his sketches, Thomson chose to focus on the sky.



Fig 19. Tom Thomson, *Approaching Snowstorm*, 1915. The overwhelming, dark cloud in this sketch suggests the power of the coming storm.

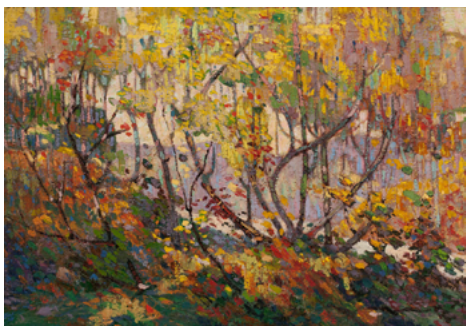


Fig 20. Tom Thomson, *Opulent October*, 1915–16. Thomson was very inspired by autumn, as were many of his friends.



Fig 21. Tom Thomson, *Nocturne: Forest Spires*, 1916. Thomson painted several night scenes in Algonquin Park.



Fig 22. Tom Thomson, *The West Wind*, 1916–17. The white foam on the waves indicates the energy of the wind.

*Learning Activity #2 Continued*

4. Have students begin their analyses of these paintings by describing their initial impressions of composition, colour, brush strokes, and texture of the paint.
5. Give students time to research these works using the [Key Works](#) section of *Tom Thomson: Life & Work*. Provide students with chart paper and have them list their major findings, building on their initial impressions and keeping in mind the original question: “What lessons did Tom Thomson’s work offer Canadian artists?” Encourage students to make connections between the themes in the book and their own analyses.
6. Have the groups display their chart papers around the room and report their findings to the class.
7. Revisit the quotation from Lawren Harris (see above) and show students two paintings by members of the Group of Seven: *The Red Maple*, 1914, by A.Y. Jackson, and *Above Lake Superior*, c.1922, by Lawren Harris. Ask students to discuss the paintings by building on their learning about Tom Thomson: Where do they see shared interests or common approaches to style?

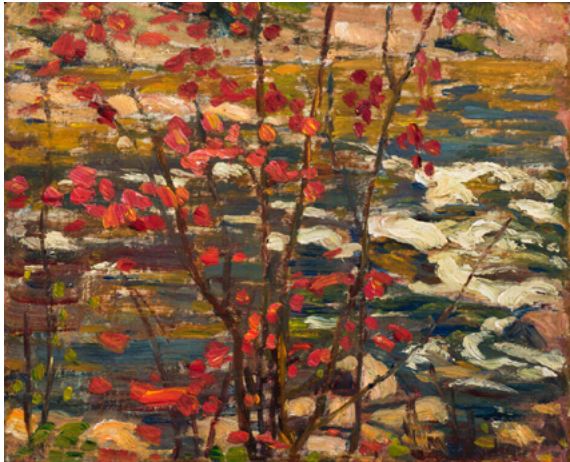


Fig 23. A.Y. Jackson, *The Red Maple*, 1914. Jackson and Thomson were friends, and in the fall of 1914, the two men went on a canoe trip in Algonquin Park.



Fig 24. Lawren Harris, *Above Lake Superior*, c.1922. Harris painted this work a few years after Thomson’s death.



## CULMINATING TASK

REFLECT CRITICALLY ON THOMSON AND THE GROUP OF SEVEN:  
RETELL-RELATE-REFLECT

Today the landscapes painted by Tom Thomson continue to be popular and meaningful for many Canadians, yet it is increasingly acknowledged that his view of Canada was very limited, and the same is true of the Group of Seven's outlook. Many of the artworks created by Thomson and the Group of Seven (including Thomson's most famous landscapes) do not acknowledge the people of Canada, and in particular, they do not acknowledge the Indigenous peoples in Canada. In this task, students are asked to explore a specific painting in relation to these issues and to their own experiences in Canada.

## Big Idea

Critical analysis of landscapes

## Learning Goals

1. I can understand the inherent bias associated with works of art.
2. I can recognize the importance of considering multiple perspectives when examining Canada's history.
3. I can present my reflections on Canadian art and identity in writing.
4. I can use art and cultural artifacts to understand the experiences of people from history.
5. I can show cultural sensitivity and respect to the stories of others.

## Success Criteria

To be added to, reduced, or changed in collaboration with students.

1. "Retell" section of report includes precise description of the chosen painting.
2. "Retell" section of report demonstrates thorough research.
3. "Relate" section of the report presents thoughtful reflections on personal understanding of Canada and Canadian landscape.
4. "Reflect" section of report presents thoughtful conclusions.
5. Report is clearly written and edited.



Fig 25. Tom Thomson, *Pine Trees at Sunset*, 1915. In this sketch Thomson used a combination of orange, yellow, and acid green in the sky, a combination of colours that he returned to when he painted *The Jack Pine*, 1916–17.

## Culminating Task Continued

## Materials

- Access to computers for research
- Paper
- Pens and pencils
- [Tom Thomson Image File](#)

## Process

1. Give students copies of Tom Thomson's *The Jack Pine*, 1916–17, and project the map of Algonquin Park (see the [Tom Thomson Image File](#)). Ask students to make notes about the two works, considering the following questions: How would you describe Thomson's representation of Algonquin Park? What can we learn from the map of Algonquin Park? Encourage students to look closely at the map: it includes railway lines, hotels, lumber camps, and telephone connections, all signs of industry in the park; several names on the map refer to Indigenous peoples. After exploring the map ask students to answer the following questions: Why do you think Thomson left these things out of his paintings? What was he trying to evoke by doing this?
2. Project A.Y. Jackson's *Terre Sauvage*, 1913, a work based on sketches Jackson made in Georgian Bay, and share the following excerpt from [Tom Thomson: Life & Work](#). Author David P. Silcox explains that the Group of Seven wanted “to present Canadians with a land that was pristine and inexhaustible—a wilderness Eden of the North,” and to accomplish this “they travelled to the ‘unpopulated wilderness’ to sketch, yet they ignored the lumbermen, miners, railway men, and vacationers who were already there, and especially the Aboriginal groups that had occupied these territories long before Europeans settled in the area.”
3. Tell students that they will be investigating a painting by a member of the Group of Seven with a view to analyzing the image of Canada that it presents and the stories, histories, and perspectives that it fails to include. They will be writing retell-relate-reflect reports to share their conclusions.
4. Give students time to research and select paintings to analyze (see Additional Resources [\[page 13\]](#) for starting points) and submit their selections for approval.
5. For the “retell” section of their reports, have students begin their analyses by describing their paintings in great detail. What is the subject matter? What are the effects of the work's colours, composition, and texture? After completing their initial analyses, have students begin to research the work. What can they learn about this artist? What can they learn about the location depicted? Students should document their research and create a bibliography of sources.



Fig 26. Tom Thomson, *The Jack Pine*, 1916–17. This painting was based on a sketch that Thomson made in Algonquin Park in the spring of 1916.



Fig 27. Poole Brothers, *Map of Algonquin Provincial (Ontario) Park, Highlands of Ontario: Canadian National—Grand Trunk Railways*, 1922. This map records the presence of many different types of activities and people in Algonquin Park.



Fig 28. A.Y. Jackson, *Terre Sauvage*, 1913. Jackson made sketches for this painting in Georgian Bay before working on the painting itself in a studio in Toronto.

*Culminating Task Continued*

6. Once students have completed their descriptions and research, give them time to write the “relate” section of their reports. Encourage them to consider the following guiding questions: Does this work describe Canada in the way that you know it? What is the Canadian landscape to you? What’s different? What’s the same? What makes you say that? Students should use research conducted during the “retell” portion of the task to explain whether they think the work represents Canada in the way that they know it, supporting their answers with facts from primary/secondary sources.
7. Have students complete their reports by writing “reflect” sections that consider the following questions: Do you think this work presents an accurate image of what Canada was like at the time? What makes you say that? What questions are you left with? Students should support their answers with facts from primary/secondary sources.



Fig 29. Tom Thomson, *Autumn, Algonquin Park*, 1916. After Thomson died, this sketch was given to J.E.H. MacDonald (1873–1932), one of Thomson’s great friends and mentors and a member of the Group of Seven.



Fig 30. Tom Thomson, *Artist's Camp, Canoe Lake, Algonquin Park*, 1915. Thomson made long trips in Algonquin Park, travelling with a silk tent! He painted his tent at least four times.



## HOW TOM THOMSON MADE ART: STYLE & TECHNIQUE

Here are a few of the important artistic concepts that characterize the art of Tom Thomson. For more information see the [Style & Technique](#) chapter of *Tom Thomson: Life & Work*.

### ART NOUVEAU INFLUENCE

Before he began to paint full time, Tom Thomson had a successful career in commercial illustration. While working at Grip Limited, Toronto's leading engraving firm, Thomson was exposed to Art Nouveau, a decorative style characterized by organic shapes and fluid lines. The influence of Art Nouveau can be seen in the curved forms and shapes in some of Thomson's paintings, including *Northern River*, 1914–15, and *The West Wind*, 1916–17.

### OIL SKETCHES

Thomson's oil sketches, or "drawings in paint," are small, spontaneous paintings done outdoors on wood panels, canvas board, plywood, and even cigar-box lids. Thomson used the sketches to capture his impressions of an enormous range of sites in Algonquin Park and Georgian Bay, as well as different seasons, weather patterns, and natural phenomena. These oil sketches had a significant impact on the overall look and feel of his paintings—the thick, expressive brush strokes came to characterize his work. Many artists used oil sketches as studies for larger canvases, but Thomson often treated his sketches as complete works in themselves. Although he created fewer than fifty canvases in his lifetime, he produced four hundred or more oil sketches.

### UNIQUE COLOURS

Thomson often mixed the pigments he had available to create new, unusual colours. The yellow-green sunset in *Pine Trees at Sunset*, 1915, and the dark blue patch of swamp water in *Cranberry Marsh*, 1916, are both examples of Thomson's experiments with colour. His unconventional use of colour, combined with his thick brush strokes, transformed his paintings from being simply representational works of art to paintings that communicated feelings and emotions. Although Thomson's painting was not classified as [Expressionism](#) (an early twentieth-century school of art that emerged in Europe), the unique colours he used in his landscapes resemble the intense, bold colours of painters that were part of this movement.

### EMPTY LANDSCAPES

Along with his friends in the Group of Seven, Thomson is known for his landscapes depicting an idealized version of the Canadian wilderness. Thomson's patron, Dr. James MacCallum, referred to his paintings as an "Encyclopedia of the North." However, many of Thomson's paintings are problematic. Both Thomson and the Group of Seven typically painted landscapes that erased all signs of human intervention, such as logging and mining. More importantly, these paintings often erased the presence of Indigenous peoples that occupied the territories. In his lifetime Thomson was considered to be documenting the land—but today we recognize that his paintings are not truly accurate.



Fig 31. Tom Thomson, *Northern River*, 1914–15. Thomson once described this painting as his "swamp picture".

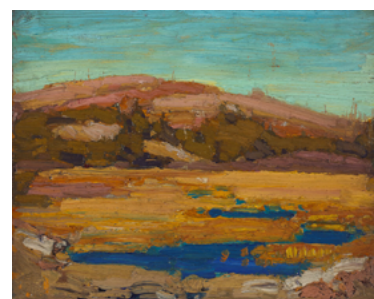


Fig 32. Tom Thomson, *Cranberry Marsh*, 1916. This sketch is notable because of its bold colours and the suggestion of strong light.



Fig 33. Tom Thomson, *Early Spring, Canoe Lake*, 1917. Thomson painted this sketch only a few months before his death.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Supplementary Materials Provided by the Art Canada Institute

- The online art book *Tom Thomson: Life & Work* by David P. Silcox: <https://aci-iac.ca/art-books/tom-thomson>
- [Tom Thomson Image File](#) with artworks and images related to this lesson.
- “Who Was Tom Thomson?” biographic information sheet ([page 2](#))
- Timelines of national and world events and Tom Thomson’s life ([page 3](#))
- “How Tom Thomson Made Art: Style & Technique” information sheet ([page 12](#))

### GLOSSARY

Here is a list of terms that appear in this resource guide and are relevant to the learning activities and culminating task. For a comprehensive list of art-related terms, visit the Art Canada Institute’s ever-growing [Glossary of Canadian Art History](#).

#### Expressionism

An intense, emotional style of art that values the representation of the artist’s subjective inner feelings and ideas. German Expressionism started in the early twentieth century in Germany and Austria. In painting, Expressionism is associated with an intense, jarring use of colour and brush strokes that are not naturalistic.

#### The Group of Seven

A progressive and nationalistic school of landscape painting in Canada, active between 1920 (the year of the group’s first exhibition, at the Art Gallery of Toronto, now the Art Gallery of Ontario) and 1933. Founding members were the artists Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and Frederick Varley.

#### *en plein air*

French for “in the open air,” used to describe the practice of painting or sketching outdoors to observe nature, and in particular the changing effects of weather, atmosphere, and light.

### EXTERNAL RESOURCES

The following external resources can be used to augment the learning activities and materials provided by the Art Canada Institute. They are to be used at the teacher’s own discretion.

#### The Group of Seven

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/group-of-seven>

#### McMichael Canadian Art Collection: The Group of Seven

<http://mcmichael.com/collection/group-of-seven/>

This article includes links to biographies of each member of the Group.

#### McMichael Canadian Art Collection: Collection

This website includes multiple paintings that might be used in the [Culminating Task](#); consider searching for paintings depicting Algonquin Park, Georgian Bay, the Rocky Mountains, or sites in other provinces.

<http://mcmichael.com/collection/>



Fig 34. Tom Thomson, *After the Storm*, 1917. One of Thomson’s final paintings, this work is full of rough, loose brushstrokes, to the point that parts of the painting almost seem abstract.

## FIGURE LIST

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Fig 1. Tom Thomson, *Moonlight*, 1913–14, oil on canvas, 52.9 x 77.1 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (no. 943).

Fig 2. Studio portrait of Tom Thomson, c.1910. The Morrison Family collection.

Fig 3. Tom Thomson, *Hot Summer Moonlight*, 1915, oil on wood, 21.4 x 26.7 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, bequest of Dr. J.M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944 (no. 4648).

Fig 4. Tom Thomson, *The West Wind*, 1916–17, oil on canvas, 120.7 x 137.9 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift of the Canadian Club of Toronto, 1926 (no. 784).

Fig 5. Tom Thomson, *Path behind Mowat Lodge*, 1917, oil on wood, 26.8 x 21.4 cm. Thomson Collection, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Fig 6. Tom Thomson, *Decorative Panel (IV)*, 1915–16, oil on beaverboard, 120.8 x 96.4 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, bequest of Dr. J.M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944 (no. 4720).

Fig 7. Members of the Group of Seven at the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto in 1920. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Fig 8. A.Y. Jackson, *A Copse, Evening*, 1918, oil on canvas, 86.9 x 112.2 cm. Beaverbrook Collection of War Art, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa (CWM 19710261-0186).

Fig 9. *Group of 7: Catalogue Exhibition of Paintings: May 7–May 27, 1920*. Thomas Fisher Canadiana Collection. University of Toronto, Ontario.

Fig 10. The Thomson children, c.1887.

Fig 11. Tom Thomson, *Northern Lake*, 1912–13, oil on canvas, 71.7 x 102.4 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift of the Government of the Province of Ontario, 1972 (72/25).

Fig 12. Tom Thomson in a canoe he painted dove grey, 1912. National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. Photo © NGC.

Fig 13. Tom Thomson's sketch box. Study Collection, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Fig 14. Tom Thomson, *Blue Lake: Sketch for "In the Northland,"* 1915, oil on wood, 21.7 x 26.9 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, bequest of Dr. J.M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944 (no. 4716).

Fig 15. Tom Thomson, *In the Northland*, 1915–16, oil on canvas, 101.7 x 114.5 cm. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Friends of the Museum, Dr. Francis J. Shepherd, Sir Vincent Meredith, Drs. Lauterman and W. Gardner and Mrs. Hobart Molson, 1922 (1922.179).

Fig 16. Tom Thomson, *Early Snow*, 1916–17, oil on canvas, 45.4 x 45.5 cm. Winnipeg Art Gallery, acquired with the assistance of a grant from the Canadian Government, approved by the Minister of Canadian Heritage under the terms of the Cultural Property Export and Import Act, and with contributions by The Winnipeg Foundation, The Thomas Sill Foundation Inc., The Winnipeg Art Gallery Foundation Inc., Mr. and Mrs. G.B. Wiswell Fund, DeFehr Foundation Inc., Loch and Mayberry Fine Art Inc, and several anonymous donors (2000-2001).

Fig 17. Tom Thomson, *Northern River*, 1914–15, oil on canvas, 115.1 x 102 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (no. 1055).

Fig 18. Tom Thomson, *Sunset*, 1915, oil on composite wood-pulp board, 21.6 x 26.7 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, bequest of Dr. J.M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944 (no. 4701).

Fig 19. Tom Thomson, *Approaching Snowstorm*, 1915, oil on wood, 21.3 x 26.6 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, bequest of Dr. J.M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944 (no. 4689).

Fig 20. Tom Thomson, *Opulent October*, 1915–16, oil on canvas, 54.0 x 77.3 cm. Private collection, Thornhill, Ontario.

Fig 21. Tom Thomson, *Nocturne: Forest Spires*, 1916, oil on plywood, 21.6 x 26.6 cm. Vancouver Art Gallery, presented in memory of Robert A. de Lotbinière-Harwood, by his friends, 1952 (52.8).

Fig 22. Tom Thomson, *The West Wind*, 1916–17. (See fig 4).

Fig 23. A.Y. Jackson, *The Red Maple*, 1914, oil on panel, 21.6 x 26.9 cm. McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, gift of Mr. S. Walter Stewart (1968.8.18).

Fig 24. Lawren Harris, *Above Lake Superior*, c.1922, oil on canvas, 121.9 x 152.4 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift from the Reuben and Kate Leonard Canadian Fund, 1929 (1335).

Fig 25. Tom Thomson, *Pine Trees at Sunset*, 1915, oil on board, 26.7 x 21 cm. Private collection, Calgary.

Fig 26. Tom Thomson, *The Jack Pine*, 1916–17, oil on canvas, 127.9 x 139.8 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (no. 1519).

Fig 27. Poole Brothers, *Map of Algonquin Provincial (Ontario) Park, Highlands of Ontario: Canadian National—Grand Trunk Railways*, 1922. Map and Data Library, University of Toronto Libraries.

Fig 28. A.Y. Jackson, *Terre Sauvage*, 1913, oil on canvas, 128.8 x 154.4 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (no. 4351).

Fig 29. Tom Thomson, *Autumn, Algonquin Park*, 1916, oil on panel, 21.6 x 26.7 cm. A.K. Prakash Collection, Toronto.

Fig 30. Tom Thomson, *Artist's Camp, Canoe Lake, Algonquin Park*, 1915, oil on wood, 21.9 x 27.2 cm. Thomson Collection, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Fig 31. Tom Thomson, *Northern River*, 1914–15. (See fig 17.)

Fig 32. Tom Thomson, *Cranberry Marsh*, 1916, oil on wood panel, 21.9 x 27 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, bequest of Dr. J.M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944 (no. 4698).

Fig 33. Tom Thomson, *Early Spring, Canoe Lake*, 1917, oil on panel, 21.6 x 26.7 cm. Private collection, photography courtesy of Heffel.

Fig 34. Tom Thomson, *After the Storm*, 1917, oil on wood panel, 21.5 x 26 cm. Private collection.