



INDEPENDENT STUDENT LEARNING ACTIVITY
FOR GRADES 6–12

Canadian Identity *through the art of* Greg Curnoe

CREATE A “CANADIAN
IDENTITY” WHEEL



Curnoe loved cycling, and he created at least 15 life-sized paintings of bikes.



ART MOVEMENT:
London Regionalism



Curnoe was part of a band. He played the drums and the kazoo.

GET TO KNOW THE ARTIST



BORN: November 19, 1936
DIED: November 14, 1992
PLACE OF BIRTH & DEATH:
London, Ontario



“It was so natural for me to associate type and text with a picture. And I quickly learned there are things you can do with a text that you can’t do with a picture.”



When Curnoe was 10 years old, his parents gave him a rubber stamp set. He went on to make many artworks using stamps.

GREG CURNOE

As a teenager, Curnoe drew a cartoon every day in his journal.



BEST KNOWN FOR:
Colourful self-portraits
and paintings of bicycles

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CREATE A “CANADIAN IDENTITY” WHEEL

Greg Curnoe (1936–1992) was an artist from London, Ontario. He began his career in the 1960s, at the beginning of a decade of change when many people asked, “What does it mean to be Canadian?” He was an ardent promoter of Regionalism—a movement that looked toward one’s own life and area for inspiration—to help define Canadian identity. He believed that there was not one single, unified Canadian identity, but rather many regional identities.

Circles are an important part of artist Greg Curnoe’s work: they appear as coloured shapes in many paintings and often as bicycle wheels. Curnoe’s work also championed the idea of a distinct Canadian identity, and the creation and reflection of this identity through art.

Through this exercise, you will think critically about what it means to be a Canadian and how you can best communicate these qualities in a visual design. Using a shape like the wedge of a circle or wheel, similar to the style of Curnoe’s work *Large Colour Wheel*, 1980, you will create a powerful visual image of Canadian identity.



Greg Curnoe, *Large Colour Wheel*, 1980, watercolour and graphite on paper, 189 x 189 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 2012 (no. 45631). © Estate of Greg Curnoe / SODRAC (2020).

Materials Needed

- Computer, iPad, etc.
- Paper
- Pencils, markers, or pencil crayons

Learning Goals

1. I can represent Canadian identity through symbols and words.
2. I can explore artmaking as a mode of personal expression.
3. I can use my critical-thinking and creative skills to analyze a piece of artwork.
4. I can work co-operatively and collaboratively with my peers.

Success Criteria

1. My artwork is creative and carefully produced using available tools.
2. My written response is clear and well edited.
3. I use proper terminology (the principles and elements of design) in my written response.
4. I can show respect and cultural sensitivity when discussing Greg Curnoe's career and art.
5. I am respectful and use appropriate language in my responses on the discussion board.

LEARNING PLAN**Step 1: 5 min**

Watch the Art Canada Institute learning video on Greg Curnoe.

<https://vimeo.com/456805427>

Think about what you found interesting about artist Greg Curnoe.

Post your thoughts on the collaborative discussion board or share them directly with your teacher using the preferred method of communication. Treat this space as you would a class discussion. Write clearly, structuring your thoughts carefully and paying attention to proper writing conventions.

Step 2: 5 min

Brainstorm a list of words and symbols related to Canadian identity. These ideas may be shared with your teacher if requested or posted to a collaborative discussion board.

Step 3: 5 min

Look at Curnoe's work *Large Colour Wheel*, 1980 (on [page 1](#)). Notice the bright use of colour and the wedges of colour that form the wheel. Think about the following questions:

- What do I see in the image?
- What does it make me think of?
- What do I wonder about this image or why it was made?

These observations may be shared with your teacher if requested or posted to a collaborative discussion board.



Greg Curnoe in 1969. Don Vincent Photo Archive. McIntosh Gallery, Western University, London. Photography by Don Vincent.

Step 4: 5 min

Before you begin creating your design for a Canadian identity wedge, closely examine the example here. Ask yourself, did you have any objects or symbols in common?

Symbols in this example include the following: the Canadian maple leaf surrounded by provincial flowers (representing both national and provincial symbols), a community of people holding hands, a poppy representing Canadian veterans and Remembrance Day, the Pride flag to show inclusion of all people, and symbols of Indigenous people in Canada.

Step 5: 40 min

Take time to sketch out your design and make a plan for your wedge. If you like, you can use the included template (on [page 4](#)) or any size wedge is great! When you are happy with your plans, draw, paint, or collage to create your visual representation of Canadian identity within the boundaries of your wedge.

When your visual design is complete, write a statement or reflection describing your work. Write clearly, structuring your thoughts carefully and paying attention to proper writing conventions. Be sure to edit your work before you submit it.

Step 6: 5 min

Post an image of your wedge and your artist statement to the collaborative gallery space that your teacher has created for this assignment.

Step 7: 5 min

Take time to explore the collaborative gallery space. Review at least two other wedge designs and provide your peers with two stars (something they have captured well) and a wish (something you wish you had seen in their work) as feedback.



Wedge Template