



LESSON PLAN

VIOLA DESMOND: WHAT MAKES A LEADER AND WHAT IS A LEGACY?

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SUBJECTS:

Language Arts,
Social Studies, History

DURATION:

5-7 classes



GRADES: 6 TO 8

KEY CONCEPTS & ISSUES

Students will gain a deeper understanding of the practice of racial segregation in Canada through learning about Viola Desmond, Lulu Anderson, and Charles Daniels.

What is racial segregation? Why was it practiced here in Canada? What has changed since then and what has remained the same? How does learning about civil rights leaders benefit us today? What is the relationship between anti-Black racism and activism? What makes a leader?

BIG QUESTIONS

- ✂ Who was Viola Desmond and what is her legacy?
- ✂ How have Black Canadians challenged the practice of racial segregation?

THEMES

Leadership, Courage, Resistance, Resilience

KEY VOCABULARY

Anti-Black Racism: prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping, and discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and its legacy. (Source: [“Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism—Glossary,”](#) Government of Ontario)

Segregation: separation of people, or groups of people, based on race in everyday life. (Source: [“Racial Segregation of Black People in Canada,”](#) The Canadian Encyclopedia)



EXPECTATIONS/OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Increase their knowledge of the struggle against anti-Black racism in Canada;
- Understand the relationship between anti-Black racism and the fight for civil rights;
- Use a variety of comprehension strategies including making connections to prior knowledge and experience, and to familiar texts; questioning; summarizing information; inferring; analysing, comparing and contrasting, and synthesizing;
- Explore character traits and the relationship between character and leadership;
- Learn that the efforts of individuals can be successful in responding to racial discrimination;
- Understand the legacy of Viola Desmond;
- Learn about the practice of racial segregation in Canada and the ways in which Black Canadians fought against it;
- Learn about Lulu Anderson and Charles Daniels, civil rights pioneers.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- *No Reason to Apologize: The Resilient Legacy of Viola Desmond* graphic novel
- Prepared **Worksheets #1-7**, [Lulu Anderson](#) and [Charles Daniels](#) articles

BACKGROUND

Throughout Canada’s history, there have been numerous examples of racial discrimination against people of African descent. Black people have been enslaved in this country and have experienced segregation in education, housing, restaurants, recreation, and theatres, in addition to the denial of equal access to employment, health care, bank loans, home ownership, and much more. These historical facts provide evidence that Canada has never been exempt from anti-Black racism. Yet in spite of these many barriers, Black Canadians have fought back and overcome many challenges to achieve accomplishments that have made Canada what it is today.



STEP ONE

UNDERSTANDING THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

After students have read the graphic novel, review some of the main ideas, themes, and events. Students will then complete **Worksheet #1** by responding to the questions in complete sentences to improve their knowledge of the meaning of the novel. If students have unanswered questions, engage in a class discussion to see if you or other students might be able to answer them. Students can submit this worksheet to be assessed for understanding or responses can be shared with the class.

STEP TWO

CHARACTER TRAITS AND LEADERSHIP

Review with students the many ways that Viola Desmond took a stand throughout the novel. Have students refer to specific pages to provide evidence. Discuss other leaders they know about and the many ways those leaders also took a stand.

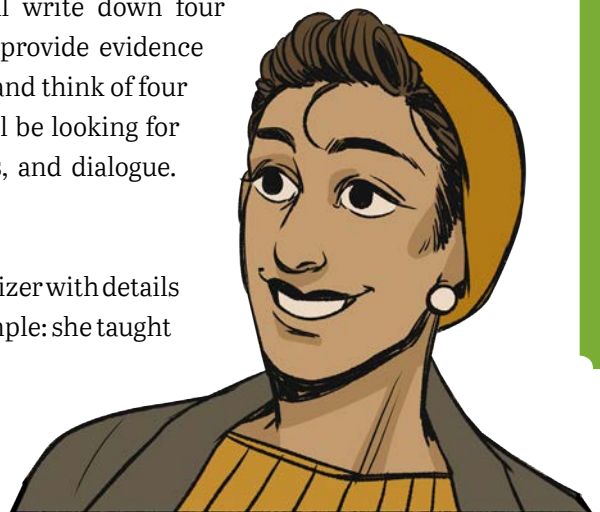
Review positive and negative character traits with students. Inform them that character traits are not always directly stated by the author. Instead, they are often revealed through behaviours, attitudes, thoughts, actions, feelings, and dialogue.

- **Teacher talk:** “I want you to think of a popular character from a book. Describe that character and provide evidence.”
- **Teacher talk:** “Can you think of a character in a book you’ve read who has changed from the beginning to the end? What was different? What event or events in the story caused the change?”
- **Teacher talk:** “What makes a good leader? Do you know any good leaders? Why do you call them a good leader? What do good leaders have in common? What are some leadership qualities and traits?”

On a chalkboard, whiteboard, or chart paper, compile a list of character traits and qualities that make a leader.

Once finished the discussion on leaders, students will work through the character activities in **Worksheet #2**.

1. To complete the “Exploring Character Traits” activity, students will write down four character traits to describe Viola Desmond in the novel. They must provide evidence from the text. Then, they will choose another character from the novel and think of four traits to describe them, again providing textual evidence. Students will be looking for character traits that are displayed through actions, thoughts, feelings, and dialogue.
2. For the “Character Analysis” activity, students will fill in the graphic organizer with details that they learned about Viola Desmond from the graphic novel. (For example: she taught



at a segregated school, she left Nova Scotia to go to beauty school, she got divorced, she moved to the United States, etc.)

3. On the next page — for the “How Does Viola’s Character Change?” activity — students will explore how Viola Desmond’s character changed from the beginning to the end of the novel. They will respond to the questions and provide textual evidence. Students will also explore which event(s) caused the change(s) in Viola’s character.
4. Lastly, to complete the “Why is Viola Desmond a Good Leader?” activity, students will examine the problem faced by Viola, how she responded to it, the resolution, the character traits she displayed, and her legacy. Then, they will write a paragraph about what makes Viola Desmond a leader. For their paragraph, students must have a topic sentence, three examples from the text, three explanations, and a conclusion sentence.

STEP THREE

MAKING CONNECTIONS

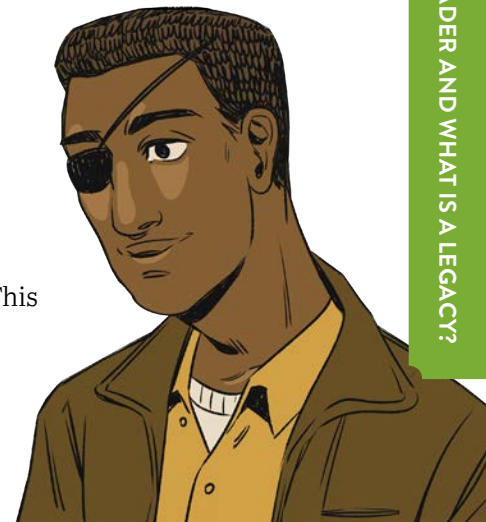
Remind students that when they make authentic connections with the text, they gain a deeper understanding of what they are reading. For this comprehension strategy, students will make text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections to the graphic novel, *No Reason to Apologize: The Resilient Legacy of Viola Desmond*.

- **Teacher talk:** There are three types of connections that readers make: text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world. These connections help readers gain a better understanding of what they are reading. I want you to think of a book you’ve read before, and I want you to make a text-to-self connection.
- What did the story remind you of?
- Could you relate to the characters or events in the story?
- Did anything in the story remind you of your own experiences?
- How did you feel while reading the story?

Next, I’d like you to make a text-to-text connection. This can be any two books you have read, a book and a poem, a book and an article, a song and a book, or any other type of text. I want you to make a connection between two of them.

- Did the one book remind you of anything in another book, article, or poem you have read?
- How was it similar to other texts you have read?
- How was it different from other texts you have read?
- Did a character in one text remind you of a character in another?

Lastly, I’d like you to make a text-to-world connection with a book you’ve previously read. This means that something in the book reminded you of a real-life event.



- What did the book remind you of in the real world?
- How were events in the story similar to events in the real world?
- How were events in the story different from events in the real world?

Then, distribute **Worksheet #3**. Students are encouraged to share their responses upon completion.

STEP FOUR

MAKING INFERENCES

Remind students that inferring is a comprehension strategy where readers “read between the lines.” They take what they already know about a subject and combine it with what the text says to draw a conclusion.

- **Teacher talk:** “I want you to make an inference. If I told you that my gym bag has a bathing suit and a towel in it, where do you think I am going? How do you know?”

“I want you to make another inference. I was out for a walk in the park and Max ran away from me. I shouted his name, and he finally came back with a ball in his mouth. Who is Max? How do you know? Why did Max run away? How do you know?”

Students will complete **Worksheet #4**. For the first part, they will read the two examples and fill in the graphic organizer by answering questions about what they already know and what they can infer. For the second part, students are asked to locate and write down three sentences of their choice from the graphic novel, what they already know about the subject matter, and what they can infer.

STEP FIVE

SUMMARY WRITING

The SWBST strategy (Somebody, Wanted, But, So, Then) can be used to summarize any story. Students will use this strategy to summarize the graphic novel, *No Reason to Apologize: The Resilient Legacy of Viola Desmond*.

Use a popular story to provide an example for students.

- **Teacher talk:** “Let’s think of ‘The Three Little Pigs’ and do an example together.”



Write this on the chalkboard or the whiteboard:

Somebody (Who were the main characters?)	the three little pigs
Wanted (What did they want?)	to live on their own
But (What was the problem?)	two of the pigs were lazy and didn't work hard
So (How did they try to solve the problem?)	it was easy for the big bad wolf to blow their houses down
Then (What was the resolution of the story?)	the two pigs ran to their brother's brick house and found safety

Then, put it together in a paragraph:

In the fairy tale, "The Three Little Pigs," three young pigs wanted to go out into the world and live on their own, but two of the pigs were lazy and didn't work hard at building their houses. So, it was easy for the big bad wolf to blow them down. Then, the two pigs ran to the brick house built by their hard-working brother and found safety.

Once students fully understand how to write a summary using this strategy, they will complete the organizer in **Worksheet #5** and summarize the graphic novel.

STEP SIX

CULMINATING TASK

Students can choose one of the three projects in **Worksheet #6** to either demonstrate their knowledge of Viola Desmond and her impact on Canadian history, or to use what they've learned from Viola in order to take a stand against current injustices. Students will then present their projects to the class.

Option 1: Students can work in a group to create a social justice campaign and a poster to accompany it.

Option 2: Students will work in a group to create a museum exhibit related to Viola Desmond.

Option 3: Students can work individually to create a six-song soundtrack to accompany the graphic novel, *No Reason to Apologize: The Resilient Legacy of Viola Desmond*.



STEP SEVEN

THE LULU ANDERSON CASE AND THE CHARLES DANIELS CASE (OPTIONAL)

Have students define “racial segregation”: the separation (by law or practice) of people according to their race. Remind students that this was once a practice throughout Canada. Ask students what they already know about segregation. Ask them to provide examples of racial segregation in the graphic novel.

Divide the class in half. Assign one group the [Lulu Anderson article](#) (by Bashir Mohamed for [CBC News](#)) and the other group the [Charles Daniels article](#) (by Rachel Ward for [CBC News](#)). Students are encouraged to write down any questions they have as they read through the articles.

Once finished, have students complete the “Compare and Contrast” activity in **Worksheet #7**. Each group will then share the details of the article they read and present their Venn Diagrams.

- **Teacher talk:** “What new information did you learn about racial segregation in Canada? What did you learn about how Black Canadians have fought back against it? Why do you think you haven’t learned about these individuals before today?”

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [“Viola Desmond”](#) (The Canadian Encyclopedia)
- [“Racial Segregation of Black People in Canada”](#) (The Canadian Encyclopedia)
- [“Finding Lulu: One Man’s Quest to Find Himself in His Own City”](#) (The Yards)
- [“Calgary’s Unknown Civil Rights Champion”](#) (The Sprawl)



RUBRIC – GENERAL



Assessment	LEVEL 1 (50 – 59%)	LEVEL 2 (60 – 69%)	LEVEL 3 (70 – 79%)	LEVEL 4 (80 – 89%)	LEVEL 4+ (90 – 100%)
Knowledge & Understanding	Student demonstrated little knowledge and comprehension of the key concepts, issues, and themes.	Student demonstrated some knowledge and comprehension of the key concepts, issues, and themes.	Student demonstrated good knowledge and comprehension of the key concepts, issues, and themes.	Student demonstrated great knowledge and comprehension of the key concepts, issues, and themes.	Student demonstrated outstanding knowledge and comprehension of the key concepts, issues, and themes.
Thinking & Inquiry	Student's planning and processing skills were not evident; student demonstrated critical and creative thinking processes to a small degree.	Student's planning and processing skills were somewhat evident; student demonstrated critical and creative thinking processes to a satisfactory degree.	Student's planning and processing skills were clearly evident; student demonstrated critical and creative thinking processes to a good degree.	Student's planning and processing skills were very evident; student demonstrated critical and creative thinking processes to a great degree.	Student's planning and processing skills were extremely evident; student demonstrated critical and creative thinking processes to an outstanding degree.
Communication	Student communicated their understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes with little degree of proficiency.	Student communicated their understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes with some degree of proficiency.	Student communicated their understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes with a good degree of proficiency.	Student communicated their understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes with a great degree of proficiency.	Student communicated their understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes with an outstanding degree of proficiency.
Application	Student used knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes to complete their assignments with little proficiency.	Student used knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes to complete their assignments with some proficiency.	Student used knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes to complete their assignments with a good degree of proficiency.	Student used knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes to complete their assignments with a great degree of proficiency.	Student used knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes to complete their assignments with an outstanding degree of proficiency.



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RUBRIC – SPECIFIC

Assessment	LEVEL 1 (50 – 59%)	LEVEL 2 (60 – 69%)	LEVEL 3 (70 – 79%)	LEVEL 4 (80 – 89%)	LEVEL 4+ (90 – 100%)
Step One	Student demonstrated a limited understanding of the main idea and details related to Viola Desmond, her experiences with racial discrimination, and her legacy.	Student demonstrated a basic understanding of the main idea and details related to Viola Desmond, her experiences with racial discrimination, and her legacy.	Student demonstrated a good understanding of the main idea and details related to Viola Desmond, her experiences with racial discrimination, and her legacy.	Student demonstrated a great understanding of the main idea and details related to Viola Desmond, her experiences with racial discrimination, and her legacy.	Student demonstrated an outstanding understanding of the main idea and details related to Viola Desmond, her experiences with racial discrimination, and her legacy.
Step Two	Student demonstrated a limited understanding of how character traits are revealed, how experiences and events cause characters to change, and how character is connected to leadership.	Student demonstrated a basic understanding of how character traits are revealed, how experiences and events cause characters to change, and how character is connected to leadership.	Student demonstrated a good understanding of how character traits are revealed, how experiences and events cause characters to change, and how character is connected to leadership.	Student demonstrated a great understanding of how character traits are revealed, how experiences and events cause characters to change, and how character is connected to leadership.	Student demonstrated an outstanding understanding of how character traits are revealed, how experiences and events cause characters to change, and how character is connected to leadership.
Step Three	Student demonstrated little ability to make logical connections with the text.	Student demonstrated some ability to make logical connections with the text.	Student demonstrated a good ability to make logical connections with the text.	Student demonstrated a great ability to make logical connections with the text.	Student demonstrated an outstanding ability to make logical connections with the text.
Step Four	Student demonstrated little understanding of how to make accurate, clearly-supported inferences.	Student demonstrated some understanding of how to make accurate, clearly-supported inferences.	Student demonstrated a good understanding of how to make accurate, clearly-supported inferences.	Student demonstrated a great understanding of how to make accurate, clearly-supported inferences.	Student demonstrated an outstanding understanding of how to make accurate, clearly-supported inferences.



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Step Five	Student demonstrated little understanding of how to accurately summarize the main idea and details.	Student demonstrated some understanding of how to accurately summarize the main idea and details.	Student demonstrated a good understanding of how to accurately summarize the main idea and details.	Student demonstrated a great understanding of how to accurately summarize the main idea and details.	Student demonstrated an outstanding understanding of how to accurately summarize the main idea and details.
Step Six Soundtrack	Student demonstrated little understanding of events in the text and how to connect music to specific scenes in the novel.	Student demonstrated some understanding of events in the text and how to connect music to specific scenes in the novel.	Student demonstrated a good understanding of events in the text and how to connect music to specific scenes in the novel.	Student demonstrated a great understanding of events in the text and how to connect music to specific scenes in the novel.	Student demonstrated an outstanding understanding of events in the text and how to connect music to specific scenes in the novel.
Step Six Museum Exhibit	Student demonstrated little knowledge of how to plan a creative exhibit that connects to Viola Desmond's experiences.	Student demonstrated some knowledge of how to plan a creative exhibit that connects to Viola Desmond's experiences.	Student demonstrated good knowledge of how to plan a creative exhibit that connects to Viola Desmond's experiences.	Student demonstrated great knowledge of how to plan a creative exhibit that connects to Viola Desmond's experiences.	Student demonstrated outstanding knowledge of how to plan a creative exhibit that connects to Viola Desmond's experiences.
Step Six Social Justice Campaign	Student demonstrated little knowledge of a current social justice issue and actions to take to achieve social justice.	Student demonstrated some knowledge of a current social justice issue and actions to take to achieve social justice.	Student demonstrated good knowledge of a current social justice issue and actions to take to achieve social justice.	Student demonstrated great knowledge of a current social justice issue and actions to take to achieve social justice.	Student demonstrated outstanding knowledge of a current social justice issue and actions to take to achieve social justice.
Step Seven	Student demonstrated little understanding of how to accurately compare and contrast two individuals in a detailed manner.	Student demonstrated some understanding of how to accurately compare and contrast two individuals in a detailed manner.	Student demonstrated a good understanding of how to accurately compare and contrast two individuals in a detailed manner.	Student demonstrated a great understanding of how to accurately compare and contrast two individuals in a detailed manner.	Student demonstrated an excellent understanding of how to accurately compare and contrast two individuals in a detailed manner.

