Interwar Years: the Winnipeg General Strike

**Concept(s)** Ethical Dimensions of History

**Prepared for Grade(s)** 10, 11, 12

**Province** BC

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**Time Period(s)** 1900-present

**Time allotment** 1 x 80 minutes

**Brief Description of the Task**

*Were the actions of the federal government during the Winnipeg General Strike justified?*

In this lesson students will learn about the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. Students will use elements of ethical judgment to determine if the actions of the federal government during the strike were justified. As an extension activity, students will discuss contemporary scenarios where the actions of the government in 1919 would and would not be justified today.

**Objectives**

**Objectives for Historical Thinking**

Ethical dimension:

Students will be able to

* suspend initial judgements in order to understand the perspectives of the historical actors;
* consider how the historical context influenced perspectives;
* arrive at a thoughtful judgement about government action that considers perspectives and context;
* reflect on the ethical implications, today, of government intervention (optional).

**Required Knowledge & Skills**

Students should have some knowledge of World War One prior to the lesson. To complete this task students will need to learn during the lesson:

* knowledge of the Russian Revolution (1917) and communism
* knowledge of the causes and events of the Winnipeg General Strike
* knowledge of the actions of the federal government during the Winnipeg General Strike

**Detailed Instructions**

1. Introduce the lesson by discussing a recent event (using a newspaper article, television clip or quick retelling) that has occurred in your community where the local, provincial or federal government has intervened. (Example: Kelowna council has decided to cull feral rabbit population). Explore with students the importance of fully understanding the context or the situation and the presence of multiple perspectives before one can decide fairly if the action of the government is justified. (10 minutes)
2. Review the conditions faced by returning war veterans and other employees in 1919. Briefly explain the General Strike and post the focus question that students will be expected to answer at the end of the lesson: Were the actions of the federal government during the Winnipeg General Strike justified? (5 minutes)
3. Use resources listed above to review the causes, events and outcomes of the Winnipeg General Strike. Students can attain this information through individual reading, partner work, or small group work. While students learn about the causes, events and outcomes of the Winnipeg General Strike have them record the actions of the federal government on the “Winnipeg General Strike” worksheet (30 minutes)
4. After the “Actions of the Federal Government” column is complete, review work with students to ensure all information is accurate. Refer to the introductory example and the importance of considering perspective and context as students complete the rest of table - emphasize student reasoning. (10 minutes)
5. Have students complete the rest of the “Winnipeg General Strike” worksheet (individually). (25 minutes) Make sure that students are able to defend their reasoning during class discussion.
6. Distribute the attached rubric and ask students to self assess their work. If time is available, they could use this to refine their worksheet or write a paragraph response to the question.
7. Optional: “Winnipeg General Strike – Extension Activity.”

**Outcomes**

Prescribed Learning Outcomes for British Columbia Socials 11

Skills and Processes of Social Studies

* Apply critical thinking – including questioning, comparing, summarizing, drawing conclusions and defending a position – to make reasoned judgments about a range of issues, situations and topics