

Canadians Prepare for Canada Day by Writing a Book

Most (95%) Canadians Agree that it is Important for Students to Read Canadian Literature in School

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Toronto, ON – In preparation for Canada Day, Canadians were asked to write a book about this country, and the stories they tell are as diverse as the country itself, according to a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Historic Dominion Institute. On an open-ended basis, Canadians could set the story wherever they wanted, starring whoever they wanted, set whenever they wanted, and write whatever kind of book they wanted, and the results tell a multitude of stories about this great country.

Canadians Tell Their Story...

Who?

The most-often cited main character in Canadians' stories would be themselves (17%), perhaps reflecting the impact that they hope to have on this country, followed by members of their family (8%), their spouse (7%), children (7%), mother (4%) and father (4%) and friends (5%). But many Canadians have chosen to incorporate some important people throughout Canada's history, including Native Americans/First Nations (4%), Canada's colonizers and explorers (3%), Jacques Cartier (3%), Pierre Trudeau (3%), Rene Levesque (2%), John A. Macdonald (2%) and even Wayne Gretzky (1%).

What?

Canadians could write about anything they wanted. One quarter (23%) would write a history book, while two in ten would make it an adventure (18%). One in ten (12%) would make it about real life, while others would write a comedy (10%), nature/landscape (10%), travel

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(8%), political (6%), family/friends/relationships (5%), mystery (5%), the beginning of Canada (5%), romance (5%), war (4%), fiction (3%), a biography (2%), drama (2%), or even a documentary (1%).

When?

Nearly one quarter (21%) of Canadians would start their book before confederation, with another 5% starting it sometime before the turn of the 20th century. Other popular starting points are before WWI (7%), in between WWI and WWII (2%), in the 50s (5%), 60s (7%), 70s (5%), 80s (5%), and the 90s (5%). Three in ten (30%) wouldn't start the book until after the turn of the 21st century. This means that a majority of Canadians would set their book in more modern times as opposed to historic times.

Most (55%) Canadians would have their book end sometime after the year 2000. Others, though, would set an earlier end date for their book: the 90s (4%), 80s (4%), 70s (4%), 60s (2%), 50s (3%), after WWI (1%), in between WWI and WWII (2%), before WWI (4%), 19th century post-confederation (3%), or pre-confederation (14%).

Where?

Reflecting a more regional approach to Canada's history, deciding where to set the story was heavily influenced by the location of the author. Those living in Quebec were most likely to set the story somewhere in that province. The same can be said for those living in Ontario and Quebec.

Nationally speaking, one in three (38%) Canadians would set their story in a city, such as Montreal (6%), Toronto (6%), Ottawa (4%), Vancouver (4%), Niagara Falls (3%) or Quebec City (2%) among others. Two in ten (18%) would choose a province, with the leading contenders being Quebec (6%), Ontario (3%) and British Columbia (2%) and Newfoundland

(2%). Other Canadians would set their story in the Rocky Mountains (3%), in their village (2%), a forest or National Park (1%) by a river (1%) or lake (1%), at a cottage (1%) or on the beach (1%), on the St. Lawrence River (1%), Parliament hill (1%), Acadia (1%), or even at their own home (1%).

Why?

Thinking about the impression that they, as an author, would want to leave on the reader, nearly one in three (31%) say they'd want the reader to come away more educated, informed, knowledgeable and enlightened, while two in ten would want the reader to be entertained (22%) and happy (22%). Others would leave the reader wanting more (10%), sad (7%), or simply provide them with a distraction (5%). Others would want the reader to be more informed about history (6%), satisfied (5%), or having fun (6%), and 3% would want to convey a message about Canada being beautiful and the best place to be.

Reading it for the First Time...

When their book is printed and bound, most authors would want to read their new masterpiece quietly at home (44%), while other Canadians would choose to read their book for the very first time outdoors (8%), by the water (6%), at the library (5%), on a beach (4%), in the park (3%), at a school (3%), book store (2%), at the cottage (2%), or some other place (24%).

The Importance of Canadian Literature...

Now that Canadians have had an opportunity to reflect on the type of book they would write about Canada, and identifying a myriad of story-telling opportunities, most (95%) 'agree' (55% strongly/40% somewhat) that 'it is important that students read Canadian literature in school', while just 5% 'disagree' (1% strongly/4% somewhat). Moreover, nine in ten (89%)

‘agree’ (48% strongly/41% somewhat) that ‘Canadian literature should be mandatory in all high school curricula across Canada’, while only one in ten (11%) ‘disagree’ (3% strongly/8% somewhat) with this type of initiative.

In fact, three quarters (76%) ‘agree’ (23% strongly/54% somewhat) that ‘Canadian literature is among the best in the world’, while one quarter (24%) of Canadians ‘disagree’ (3% strongly/21% somewhat) that it is. Perhaps a result, a majority (52%) of Canadians ‘agree’ (12% strongly/40% somewhat) that they ‘read Canadian literature on a regular basis’, while nearly half (48%) ‘disagree’ (13% strongly/34% somewhat) that they do.

Canadians were asked what one Canadian author they would like to invite to a Canada Day BBQ. Among those who gave a response, the answers, indicative of the rich literary heritage of our country, were widespread: Pierre Burton (10%), Farley Mowat (10%), Margaret Atwood (9%), Michael Tremblay (4%), Robert Munsch (3%), Marie Laberge (3%), Yann Martel (1%), Mordecai Richler (1%), David Suzuki (1%), Lucy Maud Montgomery (1%), Pierre Trudeau (1%) and Anne Robillard (1%) among many others. One in three (34%) don’t know who they would pick, and 1% said they couldn’t just pick one – there are too many from which to choose.

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between June 15-20, 2011, on behalf of the Historica Dominion Institute. For this survey, a sample of 1,009 adults from Ipsos' Canadian online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics and political composition to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/-3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had the entire population of adults in Canada been polled. All sample surveys and polls may

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be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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