

**Grade 11 - *Counterpoints: Exploring Canadian Issues, First Edition*  
Textbook Critique**

**UNIT I: CANADA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

**Chapter 1 A different Canada**

**Chapter 2 Canada and World War I**

**Chapter 3 Canada and the Twenties**

**Chapter 4 The Thirties: A Decade of Despair**

**Chapter 5 Canada and World War II**

**Chapter 6 Canada in the Post-War World**

**Chapter 7 A Changing Society**

**Chapter 8 The Canadian Identity: One, Two, or Many Nations?**

**UNIT II: GOVERNMENT AND LAW**

**Chapter 9 The Structure of Canada's Government**

**Chapter 10 The Citizen and Government**

**Chapter 11 Canada's Legal System**

**Chapter 12 The Era of Human Rights**

**UNIT III: GEOGRAPHY AND GLOBAL ISSUES**

**Chapter 13 Population: Canada and the World**

**Chapter 14 Living Standards**

**Chapter 15 Urbanization**

**Chapter 16 Patterns in Economic Development**

**Chapter 17 Environment**

**Chapter 18 Looking Forward**

Overall, *Counterpoints* is very well organized, with each unit introduction containing a column that outlines the key issues by category, a brief synopsis of each chapter in the unit, and relevant images to hook students. The chapters are also organized in a similar fashion to one another. Each chapter has several focus questions and a "counterpoints issue" - essentially a critical thinking question, such as "is today's government responsible for injustices of the past?" The counterpoints section presents students with several perspectives on a controversial issue and requires them to formulate their own, informed opinion. There is substantial incorporation of graphics such as painting, photographs, political cartoons, maps, and graphs. Images and cartoons are often supplemented with analysis questions so that students have an opportunity to engage in image analysis. Each chapter also contains a time-line delineating important events, an "innovations" section that provides context for the era under examination, and a "building your skills" section that focuses on skills such as source analysis, thesis formulation, cartoon interpretation, and so forth. With respect to source analysis however, the documents contained in the textbook are generally excerpts and so are great for skill-building but preclude opportunities for in-depth analysis. Each chapter also closes with a "looking back" section that contains lower-order to higher-order thinking questions and possibilities for research projects. Some chapters

contain an "assessing viewpoints" section that entails document analysis specific to the content of that chapter.

Although this textbook covers a variety of issues related to Canada, including legal, political, social, environmental/global, economic, and cultural, it fails to explore Aboriginal and women's issues in depth. There are only small sections devoted to issues such as the role of women in war and the challenges they face in the workforce. The topic of residential schools is also rushed, although there is opportunity in the "looking back" section for a more in-depth examination of the government's assimilation policy regarding First Nations. On a positive note, mass media, media concentration, and propaganda - which are especially relevant for critical media literacy - do receive some attention in this textbook and there are activities that involve students analyzing and creating their own media. For example, in Chapter 6, students are asked to make up a series of newspaper headlines that they might have written if they were a newspaper editor from 1960-2001, with a focus on theme of Canadian independence in foreign policy. Other examples include writing an editorial on a particular topic and analyzing the role of media in perceptions of important issues and events, such as the Vietnam War. The only limitation is that media production involves only writing activities and there is no incorporation of video, film, photography, or social media.

Overall, *Counterpoints* is a comprehensive text that allows opportunity for critical thought, skill-building, multi-ability tasks, and media production, but as mentioned above, it has several limitations and must be supplemented with additional material, such as source documents from TC2, or even the second edition of the textbook which can be found on the Pearson Canada School website. Documents and images that focus on women's and First Nations issues would also benefit student learning. In light of such omissions and biases, the teacher must emphasize a critical reading of the textbook. Finally, with respect to critical media literacy, the activities in the textbook ought to be supplemented with those from websites such as Media Smarts and there must be some incorporation of media tools or platforms that are currently popular or just emerging.