

• Introduction to Worldview

What's in a **WORD**?

One definition of **worldview** is a collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group; the overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world.

In the movie *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, the San of the Kalahari Desert (called Bushmen in the movie) are shown as a people who live completely isolated from the outside world. Like all societies, they have a set of beliefs and values that they live by, and that create meaning for them—in other words, a **worldview**. The movie explores this question: What might happen to the worldview of a society if it were challenged by something from the outside? For Xi, that “something” is a pop bottle that falls from the sky.

But how can a simple bottle affect a society? For Xi and his people, this object is completely bewildering. Because it fell from the sky, they see it as a gift from their gods. Because they don't know what it is, they try different ways of adapting it into their way of life.

However, the object leads to changes in their society. Soon, each member of the tribe wants the object for his or her own, and conflicts arise. People begin behaving in ways that were unknown before the arrival of this “gift from the gods.” Xi realizes that the object is dangerous to his people; their way of life has been thrown into chaos. He decides to venture to the end of the Earth and return the gift to the gods rather than watch as the way of life of his people changes in ways they don't want.

What happened in *The Gods Must Be Crazy* can be summed up in this way:

Isolation → Intercultural contact → Change



FIGURE 1 Xi examines a strange object that has fallen from the sky. Why do you think the filmmaker decided to use a pop bottle to represent the outside world?



FIGURE 2 This woman in Mongolia belongs to a nomadic tribe. She uses solar panels to power lights and a television in her tent. How has she adapted Western technology to her way of life? How might the things she sees on television affect her way of looking at the world?

Where does a worldview come from?

For most of us, worldview is not something we think about very much. Instead, it's something that is **pervasive**—that is, it's everywhere—in the way we think about, and act in, the world. We are not born with an individual worldview; however all of us are born into a collective, or societal, worldview. As students living and studying in Alberta, all of you are now in a part of the world dominated by what is referred to as the “Western worldview.” You will be exploring some of the characteristics of the Western worldview during the year. However, within Alberta, your community, and your classroom, there are a multiplicity of worldviews. Some of you may be members of First Nations or Inuit groups who lived here long before Europeans arrived. Some of you may be descendants of Canada's founding peoples or of the first European settlers in Alberta. Some of you may have moved to Alberta from other parts of Canada or other parts of the world. Each of those experiences will affect your worldview.

As Grade 8 students, your personal worldview is starting to develop and take shape. As you enter adolescence, you will begin to see the world around you in new ways, through new eyes. Like the Kalahari Bushmen, there will be events and experiences in your life that will play a role in the development of your worldview. Some, like the pop bottle, will challenge your emerging worldview and require you to decide where you stand on certain issues and ideas.

Worldview is a complicated concept. Before working out what worldview is, it might be helpful to understand what worldview is *not*.

Your worldview is not your point of view. Your point of view is the way you see things as an *individual*. Different people in your family, your class, and your community have different points of view. For example, some might prefer summer sports, and some prefer winter sports. Worldview is much more than personal preference or opinion.

FYI...

In 2005, Alberta welcomed more than 19 000 immigrants to the province. In the most recent census, Albertans listed more than 20 **mother tongues** (languages they learned as children).

What's in a **WORD**?

point of view opinions and preferences held and expressed by an individual

What's in a **WORD**?

perspective the collective point of view of a specific group. A perspective can be expressed by a member of the group who has the authority to speak for others.

A worldview is not a perspective. Perspective is a point of view that a *group* of people share. For example, from the European perspective, the North American continent was “the New World,” to be explored and owned. But the Indigenous peoples who had lived in North America for thousands of years saw nothing “new” about it and did not understand how anyone could “own” the land that belonged to everyone.

Worldview includes perspective and point of view, but it is also more than that. Our worldview creates meaning for us—it answers important questions, such as

- ◆ Who are we?
- ◆ Where do we come from?
- ◆ How do we manage our way of life?
- ◆ Where are we going?
- ◆ Why is the world the way it is?
- ◆ What is true and what is false?

Worldview isn't static: it changes over time, and with new experiences. And, as it takes shape, our worldview becomes more than just how we see the world; it becomes the basis for how we act in the world and the choices we make as citizens of our local and global community.



FIGURE 3

Introducing the Worldviews Icon

The worldviews icon (Figure 3) appears throughout this text book. It includes seven elements that can be used to explore worldview. The elements are time, beliefs, society, values, economy, knowledge, and geography. The icon can help you:

- ◆ identify point of view, perspective, and worldview around a particular issue
- ◆ identify and explore the characteristics of your worldview
- ◆ identify areas of similarity and difference in the worldviews of different people and different cultures
- ◆ recognize when changes in worldview occur, and investigate the impact of change on a particular element
- ◆ evaluate the impact one element sometimes has on other elements

The following table suggests some aspects for you to consider about each worldviews element. Add any additional questions you can think of.

Thinking About the Worldview Elements

Worldviews Element	Possible Questions
Geography	What role do geographical factors such as climate and location play in how people look at the world and behave in it?
Time	In what terms is time viewed by a society, e.g., mechanical (e.g., clocks and watches, etc.) or natural (e.g., the seasons, the sun, the moon)?
Society	What roles are available to individuals in society? Who holds power and how is power maintained? Who has status and how do they get it? Are certain benefits available to some and not to others?
Values	How do people in a society act toward each other? How do people in a society act toward people in other societies/groups?
Beliefs	What beliefs do people hold about life and death? About their environment?
Economy	Who controls the resources? What is to be produced? How will it be produced? For whom? How is property distributed? Protected?
Knowledge	How do people develop knowledge? What ways of knowing are accepted? Who has access to knowledge? How is it valued? Where or in whom does the knowledge reside?

Think IT THROUGH

In groups of two or three students, choose one of the worldviews elements. How do you, as members of your school community, answer the questions suggested for your chosen worldviews element?

Using the Worldviews Icon

Let's try an example. Think back to what you learned in earlier social studies courses about Canadian society around the time of World War I. Which members of Canadian society had the right to vote? How old did voters have to be? Now think about today. The extension of voting privileges to all Canadian citizens 18 years and older represents a major shift in worldview. Which element, or elements, of the worldviews icon do you think changed? Why?

Some of you may have chosen "society" as the element that has changed, while others may have chosen "values." Some may have chosen both elements, and some of you may have chosen a different element altogether. Depending on the reasons you give for your choice, you may all be correct. The point of the icon is to help you gain an appreciation for the fact that worldviews *do* change, and that worldview changes have an impact on how people live in a society.

“Reading” Pictures



FIGURE 4

You may have heard the expression, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” but what are some ways of getting that picture to “talk”? Try this formula:

Pictures → Words → Questions

Here’s how it works.

Examine the Image. Look at Figure 4. Can you tell what’s happening at first glance? Or does it seem that the longer you look, the more possibilities there are? Are the three people in the middle holding hands because they are having fun? Or are they watching something else we can’t see? What’s that blowing between the trees? Is it dust? Is it smoke? And who are these three people? Are they a family? Or friends? Where is this happening? And when?

Read the Caption. Figure 4 has this caption: May 4, 1963, Birmingham, Alabama. An African-American man and two African-American women hold hands and try to brace themselves against the harsh spray of a fire hose during an anti-segregation protest. (Segregation forced African

Americans to live, work, and play separately from the majority white population.) Against 3000 protestors, police released dogs, attacked with electric cattle prods, and used water sprayed with enough strength to rip bark off trees.

Formulate Questions. Have the words of the caption told you everything? You know why the three people are holding hands, and why the other people are here, too—demonstrating for their civil rights. But is that the full story? Or are there now more questions to ask? Why was a water hose turned on young men and women? Why did the police release dogs against a crowd as peaceful as this one appears to be? And is the view that this picture gives us of these events the only view to take, or could someone else see things differently? What other questions does the picture raise for you now that you’ve examined it closely?

When Figure 4 was shown on television, many Americans were confronted for the first time with the evidence of how African Americans were treated in parts of the country. Although it did not happen overnight, most Americans came to view

the laws that segregated African Americans from the rest of society as unjust, and those laws were changed. The process could be stated as:

Isolation on the part of many Americans about what was going on in their country (in this case, isolation means lack of knowledge and experience)

Contact via television that forced them to see what was happening

Change as many Americans realized that such treatment did not fit with their values, or their vision for their country, ultimately resulting in laws being changed.



FIGURE 5 The Amish choose to limit their contact with broader society and avoid using modern inventions such as electricity and cars. Known as “the Gentle People,” they do not believe in serving in the military. About 140 000 Amish live in North America; approximately 1500 in southern Ontario. In 2006, 11 Amish families from Walkerton, Ontario, re-settled near Gladstone, Manitoba, about 100 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg.



FIGURE 6 For decades, the Berlin Wall in Germany separated East (communist) Berlin from West (democratic capitalist) Berlin. The Wall also symbolized the Iron Curtain, the division between democratic Western Europe and communist Eastern Europe. In 1989, soldiers looked on as citizens of East and West Berlin tore the wall down.



FIGURE 7 *Airplanes over Ice Cap*. Inuit Elder Pudlo Pudlat (1916–1992) created this image in 1980. What are some of the changes Pudlat would have seen during his lifetime? What challenges might contact with the outside world present to the once-isolated Inuit?

Try It!

- With a partner, apply the *pictures* → *words* → *questions* formula to each of the images above. What questions do you have that relate to point of view, perspective, or worldview?

Putting It All Together: Point of View, Perspective, and Worldview

When the *Employment Standards for the Employment of People Under 18* was amended on June 5, 2005, to include the employment of adolescents in certain occupations in the food and services industry, there was a public outcry on the part of many Alberta citizens. Comparisons were made to the child labour practices that existed in North America in the early 20th century.

Letters to the editor in many local papers presented arguments on both sides of the issue. In most cases, people who wrote letters were expressing their *points of view* on this situation. Some believed that the changes in the legislation would result in even more adolescents dropping out of high school. Others stated that Alberta's booming economy needed more employees in the service industry, particularly the fast-food industry where many of the adolescents were being employed. However, some people wrote to present the *perspective* of a particular group. For example, when Gil McGowan, president of the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL), wrote an article condemning the new legislation, he was presenting the AFL's perspective on the issue.

And worldview? *Worldview* in this case is how Canadian society as a whole views childhood. In 1910, when Lewis Hines took the photo of Sadie (Figure 8), the worldview of North American society was that child labour was acceptable, without ensuring minimum standards of safety and without requiring a minimum level of education. Today, this is no longer the case. The difference is a major shift in worldview.

Think IT THROUGH

Identify the elements of the worldviews icon that you think changed. Explain.



FIGURE 8 Sadie Pfeiffer was a young girl who worked in a South Carolina cotton mill in 1910. This photograph, and others by Lewis Hines, helped bring about improved labour laws to protect children. As of 1911, in some parts of the United States children could work only eight hours per day and were not permitted to work at night. This was a great improvement in children's working lives.



FIGURE 9 In Alberta, you must be 12 to 14 years of age to work in certain occupations. You must attend school and may work only two hours on any school day, and a maximum of eight hours on a non-school day.

Thinking Critically

Thinking about worldviews requires us to examine beliefs and assumptions that we may not have examined before. It can be challenging to try to understand the worldviews of people who lived in a different time or place. In order to help with this challenge, it will be useful to apply *critical thinking* skills. Critical thinking means carefully questioning your own thoughts—the beliefs, assumptions, and conclusions that you may not have examined before.

An effective critical thinker:

- is open-minded
- raises important questions and problems and expresses them clearly
- gathers and assesses relevant information, interprets that information effectively, and tests conclusions and solutions against relevant criteria and standards
- communicates well with others in pursuit of effective solutions to problems

How do you know if you're applying critical thinking skills? As you work through your Social Studies program, use the checklist below to keep you on track.

When I state my own opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I identify my point of view • I stay on topic • I remember to state my major point in my introduction
When I respond to someone else's opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I indicate whether I agree or not • I identify both the strengths and the weaknesses of the other point of view • I am fair-minded in evaluating all points of view
When I draw some conclusions or interpret some information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I base them on some kind of evidence • I check to see if they are consistent with each other • I base them on assumptions that I can state
When I use evidence to support my claims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I check that all evidence used is clear, accurate, and relates to the issue • I use sufficient evidence • I consider evidence that opposes my position as well as information that supports it
When I base my claims on some assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I clearly identify my assumptions and determine whether they are justifiable • I consider how my assumptions are shaping my point of view
When I use some concepts and ideas that others may not understand or may interpret differently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I identify key concepts and explain them clearly • I consider alternative concepts or alternative definitions of concepts • I make sure I am using concepts with care and precision
When I come to a definite final conclusion about the issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I trace the implications and consequences that could follow from my reasoning • I search for negative as well as positive implications • I consider all possible consequences

Exploring Worldview

What happens when two worldviews disagree?

FAST FORWARD

Ownership of Ocean Resources

Did you know that countries have control over the natural resources such as fish and oil in the waters around their shore? The distance that this economic control extends is 370 kilometres. But what about the ocean waters beyond that distance? Who is in charge of the resources there?



How can we find out what a person's, or a society's, worldview is?

FAST FORWARD

Roméo Dallaire: Hero

When you think of modern day heroes, whom do you think of? Many Canadians and others around the world consider Roméo Dallaire a hero. He was sent to Africa to be the Force Commander with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda. His role was to oversee the transfer of power to the newly elected Rwandan government. But he and his troops walked into a genocide.



How do worldviews change?

EXPLORING SOURCES

A New Way of Thinking

The shogun's advisors told him of a new way of thinking in the West. It was the scientific method you read about in Chapter 4.

People of the red-hair country [the Dutch and English] customarily do things by mental reckoning and by reason; they



Evaluating

- What did I learn from this inquiry that will help with my next inquiry?
- What advice might I offer to someone starting a similar inquiry?
- How did this inquiry help me to understand more about worldview?

Sharing

- Did I allow time to rehearse?
- Is written work carefully edited and neatly presented?
- How will I support other presenters?
- How will I learn from other presenters?

Do I have a worldview?



What impacts do worldviews have?



Planning

- Have I clearly identified an inquiry question?
- How will I find and organize the information?
- What will my final product look like?
- How will my work be evaluated?

Retrieving

- Where can I look for information?
- Are there Building Your Skills features or organizers in my textbook that can help me collect and analyze information?

Reflecting

Thinking about your inquiry

- Am I considering all points of view?
- Will my audience understand?
- Do all group members understand their responsibilities?
- Did I include a variety of visuals?

Processing

- Is my information accurate, consistent, and reliable?
- Do I need to ask other questions?
- Have I applied critical thinking skills?

Creating

Labour Laws in India

Here is a recent article about child labour in India. Consider how the situation in India compares with that in North America in the early 1900s and in Canada in the 2000s.

India child labour ban comes into effect: New law a double-edged sword for impoverished children

NEW DELHI - A ban on child labour in India took effect Tuesday, but at roadside food stalls across the capital, New Delhi, many of the boys and girls who serve glasses of tea, wash dishes, mop floors and take out trash were not celebrating.

The children of India's tens of millions of poor families are expected to work and in many cases they are the sole breadwinners.

The new law bans hiring children under age 14 as servants in homes or as workers in restaurants, tea shops, hotels and spas.

Despite the subcontinent's emerging economic power, child labour remains widespread in India. Conservative estimates place the number of children covered by the new law at 256,000. All told, an estimated 13 million children work in India, many of them in hazardous industries, such as glass-making, where such labour has long been banned.

At one roadside tea shop, the Harish Dhaba, talk among the child workers focused on the hardships of the new ban.

"As long as I can remember, I've worked in a restaurant, washing dishes, cutting vegetables, throwing out the garbage," said Rama Chandran, a frail-looking 13-year-old, as he cleared dishes from grimy tables in the tiny, smoke-filled eatery.

He has been working in New Delhi for nearly four years and said the money he sends home to his widowed mother and three younger siblings in southern India is crucial to their survival.

"If I didn't send money home, they would starve," Chandran said.

Employers who violate the new child labour law face up to a year in prison and a fine worth the equivalent of C\$245.

Officials are promising strict enforcement. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said firm action would be taken against violators.

"I call upon each one of you to stop employing children as workers and actively encourage children to join schools," he said.

Even though many are uncertain whether the law will be enforced, Chandran's boss has told him and the other child workers to stay away for a few days to see what happens.

Rights activists criticize the law, saying it does not address the root causes of child labour or provide any kind of safety net for children put out of work.

"The fundamental reason is abject poverty -- that is the most important and fundamental issue why children are labouring," said Rita Panicker, who heads Butterflies, a non-governmental organization that works with street children.

The Associated Press

- How do economic conditions for some people in India challenge the changes the government is trying to make?
- Use the elements of the worldviews icon to identify the shift in worldview the new legislation attempts to impose.

The Journey Ahead

During this year's social studies course, you will have the opportunity to investigate what worldview is, how it is shaped and formed, and what happens as a result of intercultural contact. In particular, you will investigate how the worldviews of Renaissance Europeans, the Aztecs, and the Japanese during the Edo and Meiji periods changed because of intercultural contact. At the same time, you will be identifying the elements of your own worldview, and how your worldview shifts and changes. The key to understanding the forces that are shaping your own worldview is to examine and apply critical thinking skills to the changes that revolutionized societies in the past.

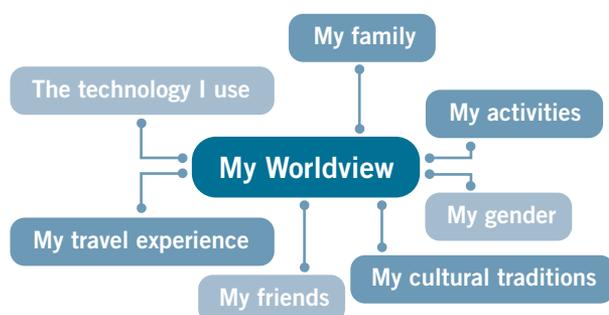
Are you ready for the challenge?

Over to YOU

Exploring Your Worldview

Now take some time to think about your worldview. What are the values, attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge that shape how you interact with the world? Your worldview influences many different factors and is also influenced by those same factors. Some of these factors are in the web below.

1. Add other items to the web that you think could influence the way a person thinks and behaves. Expand your web to include ways your family, the technology you use, etc., influence your worldview. For example, what influence might having relatives in another country, or watching the news on TV every day, have on your worldview?



2. Choose four factors from the web and write two or three sentences about how each of them has shaped your way of thinking and behaving.
3. Get together in a small group of three to five students and share your answers to Questions 1 and/or 2. Discuss the following questions:
 - a. Why are some aspects of the worldview of people in our group similar?
 - b. Why are some aspects different?
 - c. Why will some aspects of our worldviews probably change throughout our lives?
 - d. Why might some aspects stay the same?