

Outside of the “Book”

Saskatchewan School Library Association

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Exploring the World of Reading

For many teachers and teacher-librarians, the task of enticing students to read Canadiana is not always easy, particularly in a secondary English Language Arts classroom. Teacher-librarian Jacqueline Helman discovered that students had very little knowledge of the rich diversity that exists in Canadian literature. When the grade twelve 30A English Language Arts teacher approached Jacqueline to introduce a variety of books around the curricular theme of Canadian Voices, the teacher-librarian was determined to try something novel.

Jacqueline Helman chose to use Google Earth as a tool to introduce students to the world of Canadian literature. She created an interactive presentation that would take students on a cross-country tour of our diverse nation and would allow them to virtually visit some of the sites where the stories are set, all from the comfort of their classroom.

Once Jacqueline Helman had the presentation ready, she went into the classroom equipped with a cart full of books and the Google Earth link ready to share. As she projected the presentation on the data projector, Jacqueline incorporated video clips and interesting information about the authors of some of the featured Canadian books. As an example, she showed the students a movie clip from *Handmaid’s Tale* by Margaret Atwood and highlighted that it was a dystopian novel, a genre of great interest. The students “visited” Russia where the true story of *Tiger* takes place and Jacqueline included a picture of the author John Vaillant, a brief biography, and a link to the YouTube video that promoted and summarized his newest book.

During the sixty minute session, the students travelled across Canada and were introduced to approximately six authors, and at least twenty books. Jacqueline Helman blended the traditional booktalk with the free Internet tool, Google Earth. It was important for Jacqueline to know if this strategy was worthwhile repeating, so she requested feedback from the students and the teacher. Their responses were overwhelmingly positive. In fact, the teacher asked Jacqueline Helman to visit his class again this semester.

Investing the Time

For teachers or teacher-librarians wishing to employ Google Earth in booktalks, Jacqueline Helman cautions that time (although minimal) is required to learn how to navigate Google Earth. Once comfortable with the tool, Jacqueline researched the authors, found their biographies, located author pictures, and checked out video links of interest to the students. The information was then placed using the “placemark” tool in Google Earth. The time invested in the setup and preparation is advantageous because the file can be saved and tweaked as needed.

Jacqueline Helman commented that Google Earth is a favourite tool due to its ease of use, the inclusion of video tutorials to provide assistance, and its ability to complement any curriculum subject and grade level. Google Earth allows students to have a visual experience that opens up a whole new world of opportunity.

To view the Canadian literature Google Earth booktalk, please download Google Earth and visit the appended link located on *The Medium* web page.

Google Earth Resources

[Google Earth Download](#)

[Google Earth Across The Curriculum](#): Resources and ideas for using

[Google Earth Tutorials and Tips](#)

[Student Created Exemplars](#)

[Google Earth Tip Sheet](#)

[26 Interesting Ways to Use Google Earth in the Classroom](#)

[Google Lit Trips](#): Using Google Earth, students discover where in the world the greatest road trip stories of all time took place.

Applications to Content Areas

Social Studies/History:

- Visit current places to discuss world issues
- Visit ancient civilizations such as Ancient Rome in 3D
- Compare historical maps to modern day by using the “street view” level function to see how people live day to day within their communities.
- [Explore the World’s Most Famous and Amazing Places](#)

Science:

- See real-time seismic activity
- Explore habitats, astrology, and oceans
- Explore [Mars](#) in 3D
- Visit [the moon](#) landing sites
- Tour the [Latest Earthquakes: Feeds and Data](#): Download one of the earthquake KML feeds and open it in Google Earth. Earthquakes refresh every 5-minutes
- Explore the global awareness gallery for layers and tours related to environmental science

Math:

- Use math for charting demographics, distance, and statistics
- Investigate real world math applications

Language Arts:

- Explore languages of the world, authors, places where “the story” takes place.

Art:

- Visit art museums
- Tour places where famous artists were born

Physical Education:

- Highlight paths for marathon and triathlons
- Tour Olympic sites