

Just Like Us?

A LOOK AT THE BORDER, HISTORY, AND CULTURE THAT CANADIANS SHARE WITH AMERICANS—AND WHAT SETS THEM APART

FAST FACTS

AREA: 3,849,670 sq mi
[second-largest, after Russia]

POPULATION: 34,100,000

PER CAPITA GDP*: \$38,200

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic, 44%; Protestant, 29%; other Christian, 4%; Muslim, 2%; other, 4%; none, 17%

LANGUAGES: English, French

LITERACY: 99% (U.S.: 99)

LIFE EXPECTANCY: 78 male;
83 female (U.S.: 75/80)

*GDP stands for gross domestic product; per capita means per person. The amount is the value of all items produced in a country in a year divided by the population. It often is used as a measure of a nation's wealth.

SOURCES: The World Factbook 2010 (CIA), 2010 World Population Data Sheet (Population Reference Bureau), and Statistics Canada

Words to Know

- **psyche** (*SY-kee*) (*n*): the human mind, soul, or spirit
- **referendum** (*n*): a bill passed by a legislature that citizens approve or reject by a direct vote
- **surveillance** (*n*): close watch kept over a person or thing, often with suspicion of wrongdoing

BY IAN AUSTEN IN OTTAWA, ONTARIO

The traditional symbols of Canada are well-known. The beaver commemorates the fur trade that was the country's first industry in the 1600s, and the maple leaf is a fitting symbol for a nation with a vast wilderness. And of course there's the national sport—hockey!

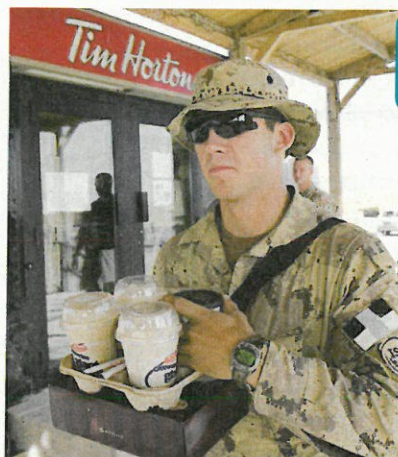
In recent years, however, those symbols have been upstaged. "Unfortunately, we define ourselves somehow by a doughnut chain," says Rick Mercer, a popular Canadian comedian.

Mercer, who pioneered fake news long before Jon Stewart, isn't joking. He's referring to Tim Hortons, a restaurant chain named for a popular hockey player who died in a car crash in 1974.

When the chain recently changed how its doughnuts are baked, the news made headlines across Canada. A portable Timmy's, as the shops



Residents of Beebe Plain, Vermont (left), and Beebe Plain, Quebec (right), get together along the border that runs through their town.



A Canadian soldier leaves a Tim Hortons in Afghanistan.

are known, even followed Canadian troops to Afghanistan, where the soldiers have been fighting alongside U.S. troops.

Americans, who taught the world about fast food, would find nothing strange in a national obsession with doughnuts. Indeed, Americans and Canadians have a

BOTTOM LEFT: AP IMAGES/CP; RYAN REMIOWZ; ABOVE: BOB KRIST/CORBIS



great deal in common, as a result of their shared border, history, and culture. But there are real differences. Somewhere along the way, Canadians developed a sensibility that is unlike that of their neighbors to the south. To a large extent, that sensibility is a reflection of what they are *not*—American.

Common History

Except for Quebec, where most people speak French, Canadians speak English pretty much the way Americans do. Turn on a TV, and you'll find Canada's own *Rick Mercer Report*, a program that may

remind you of *The Colbert Report* and *The Daily Show* just a few channels away.

Although the differences between the neighbors may be subtle, they do exist. They began during colonial times, when the two nations took different routes in their respective relationships with Great Britain, and began to drift apart.

The U.S. gained independence from Britain through the American Revolution (1775-1783). Canada's government, by contrast, was established by Britain's Parliament.

It didn't help matters that the

U.S. attacked the future Canada—because of its anger at Great Britain—during the War of 1812.

Life at the Border

The two countries have long enjoyed friendly relations along the border, as the photo above shows. The 5,500-mile dividing line between Canada and the U.S. was once described as the “world's longest undefended border,” and crossing it was a routine matter.

That changed somewhat after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the U.S. Since then, the border has become increasingly



A sign in Lake Metigoshe State Park in North Dakota. Since the 9/11 attacks, security along the 5,500-mile U.S.-Canadian border has increased.



monitored, often through the use of electronic **surveillance** systems. Swaths of forest on the American side have been cleared to prevent anyone from sneaking across the border, while armed U.S. officials patrol border rivers in boats.

“Since 9/11, I’ve sometimes been treated like a criminal by U.S. Customs,” says Clara Hughes, a cyclist and speed skater who has won Olympic medals for Canada. Married to an American, Hughes lives in a Canadian village close to Vermont, where she trains on her bicycle several times a week.

“It’s a bit funny to be asked [by Border Patrol guards] when you’re on your bike if you’re carrying \$10,000 or more on your person,” she tells *JS*.

This is a sad development for many Canadians, whose ideas of the border were nourished in childhood imaginations—including my own. I grew up in Windsor, Ontario, during the 1960s. Back then, it was a well-established “fact” that the

real Santa Claus held court at the Christmas Village at J.L. Hudson department store, just across the border in Detroit, Michigan. Canadian Santas were imposters!

Pride—and “Smugness”

Indeed, the U.S. has often been seen by Canadians as a consumer’s paradise—and a land of greater economic opportunity.

“I felt that the U.S. was the

recent decades. Mercer understands why top Canadian comedians such as Mike Myers and Dan Aykroyd left for New York or Hollywood. “There’s no bigger big-time than the U.S.,” he says.

That doesn’t mean, however, that Canadians feel inferior to Americans. Many of them believe that although Canada may not offer the same opportunities, it has fewer problems—and does many

“Something shifted in the Canadian psyche that allowed us to feel pride.”

promised land,” writer Miriam Toews tells *JS*. “Even just crossing the border from Manitoba into North Dakota was magical and exciting.” Toews’s novel *A Complicated Kindness* tells the story of a girl who dreams of leaving her small Manitoba town for New York City.

That magnetic pull southward has lured many entertainers in

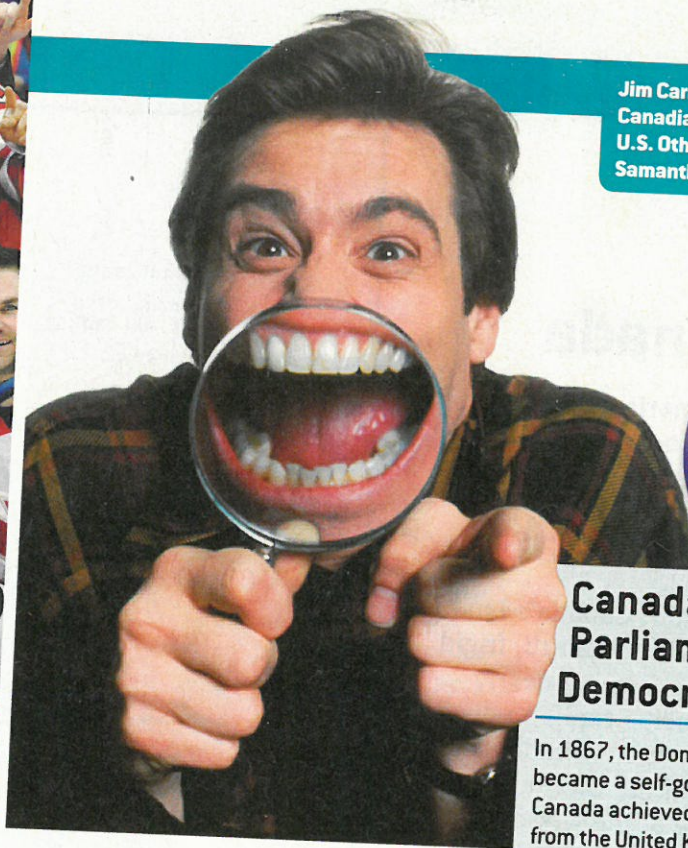
things better—than the U.S. “There is very much a smugness” among Canadians, admits Hughes.

Take health care, for instance. Canadians were baffled when American politicians portrayed Canada’s government-run system as a disaster during the recent health-care debate in Washington, D.C. Canadians overwhelmingly support their public system.

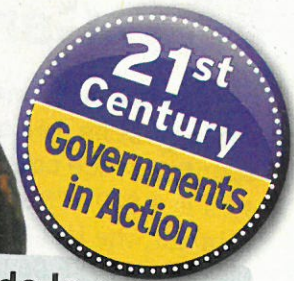


The Canadian men's ice hockey team celebrates after winning Olympic gold by defeating the U.S. 3-2.

ver 2010



Jim Carrey is one of many Canadian comedians living in the U.S. Others include Will Arnett, Samantha Bee, and Martin Short.



Canada Is a Parliamentary Democracy.

In 1867, the Dominion of Canada became a self-governing union. Canada achieved full independence from the United Kingdom in 1931.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH: The Prime Minister, head of the government, is usually the leader of the largest party in the House of Commons. Canada retains a link to the U.K. through the British Queen. Formally, she is head of state, although hers is a purely ceremonial position. The Governor General, her representative, is appointed by the Queen on the advice of Canada's Prime Minister.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH: Parliament has two chambers. The Senate's 105 members are appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister. They serve until age 75. The more-powerful House of Commons has 308 members, who are elected by the people for terms of up to five years.

JUDICIAL BRANCH: The Supreme Court of Canada has nine judges, who are appointed by the Governor General (with the Prime Minister's approval) and serve until age 75.

FOR COMPARISON, SEE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT PROFILE AT scholastic.com/js/ourgovt.

They are also appalled by the large gap they see between the rich and poor in the U.S.—and the assumption by Americans that they should always be able to tell the world what to do.

Good health care is only one reason some Americans have found Canada a much more reasonable place to live. In troubled times, Canada has also provided a refuge for America's rebels and outcasts (see sidebar, p. 15).

But Canada has its own dramas and divisions. Quebec has provided plenty of both. Originally colonized by France, the lower part of the province continues to guard its French language and identity.

In recent decades, separatist Québécois (*kay-beh-KWAH*) have pressed for independence from Canada. A 1995 referendum to secede only narrowly failed, and no one expects the issue to go away.

Traditionally, Canadians have avoided overt patriotism. They weren't likely to wave flags as they

saw Americans do. That changed, however, when Canada hosted the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver, British Columbia.

The stakes were high for a nation in which ice hockey is bigger than the NFL, the NBA, and MLB combined. Commentators jokingly feared for the country's sanity if the men's hockey team didn't win the gold medal.

They did, edging out the U.S. team for the gold, 3-2. That result, along with the success of other homegrown Olympic athletes, made Canadians less timid about cheering for their country.

"Something shifted in the Canadian **psyche** that allowed us to feel pride," says Hughes, who carried the Canadian team's flag in the opening ceremonies. "We need to feel proud, because I think that Canada represents a whole lot of good and a whole lot of giving."

Now, it seems, Canadians have even more in common with their American neighbors.

MapSearch



Canada

Canada is North America's giant—the largest as well as northernmost country on the continent. Canada's area is 3,849,670 square miles. (By contrast, the U.S.'s is 3,717,796 and Mexico's is 756,062.)

Only 4.6 percent of Canada's land is arable (farmable). In the north, frigid temperatures make farming nearly impossible. That helps explain why an estimated 75 percent of Canadians live within 100 miles of the U.S. border.

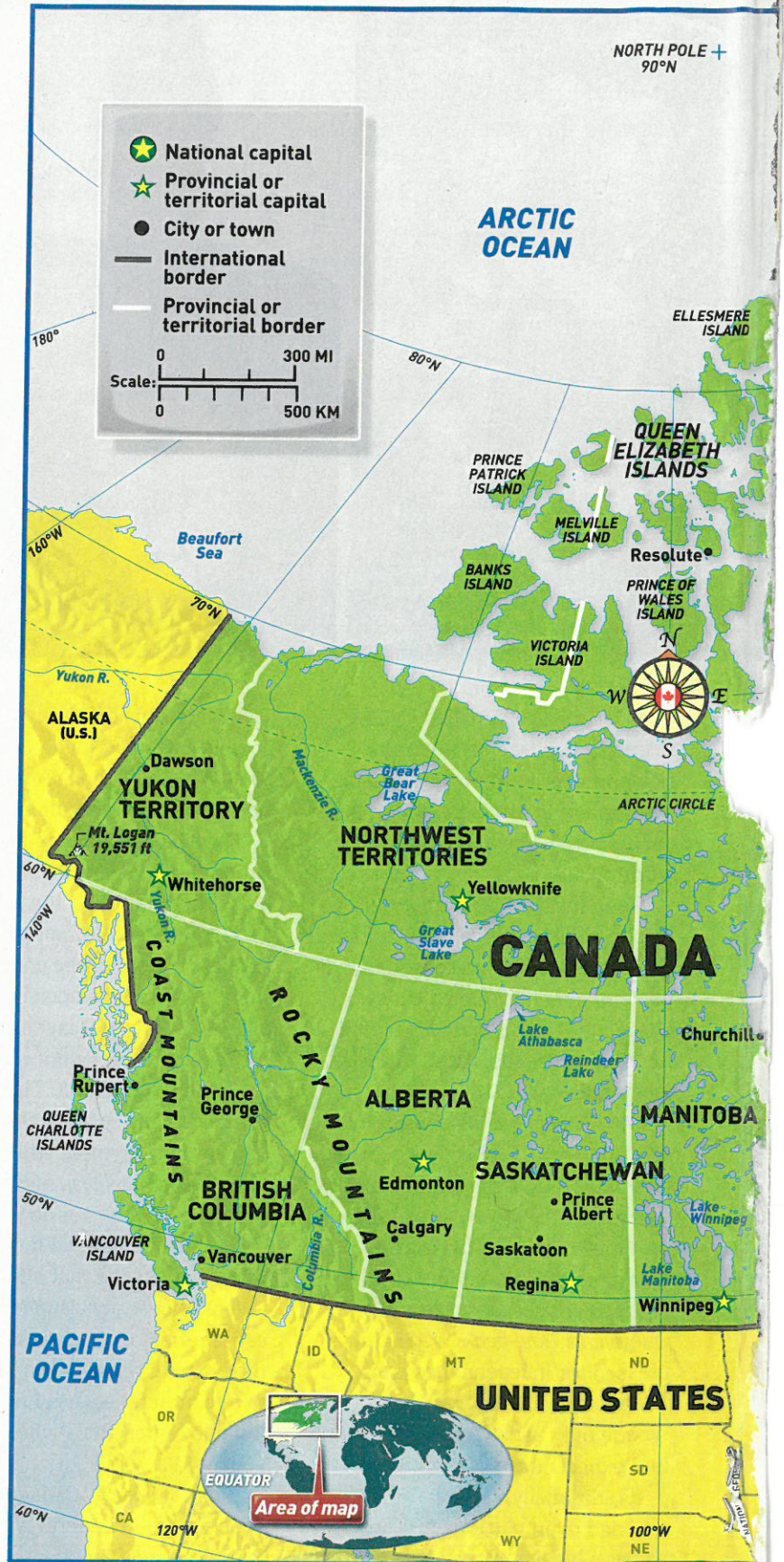
Canada has one of the world's strongest economies. It is rich in natural resources, including oil and gas, as well as gold and other minerals.

Study the map and sidebar, then answer the questions below.

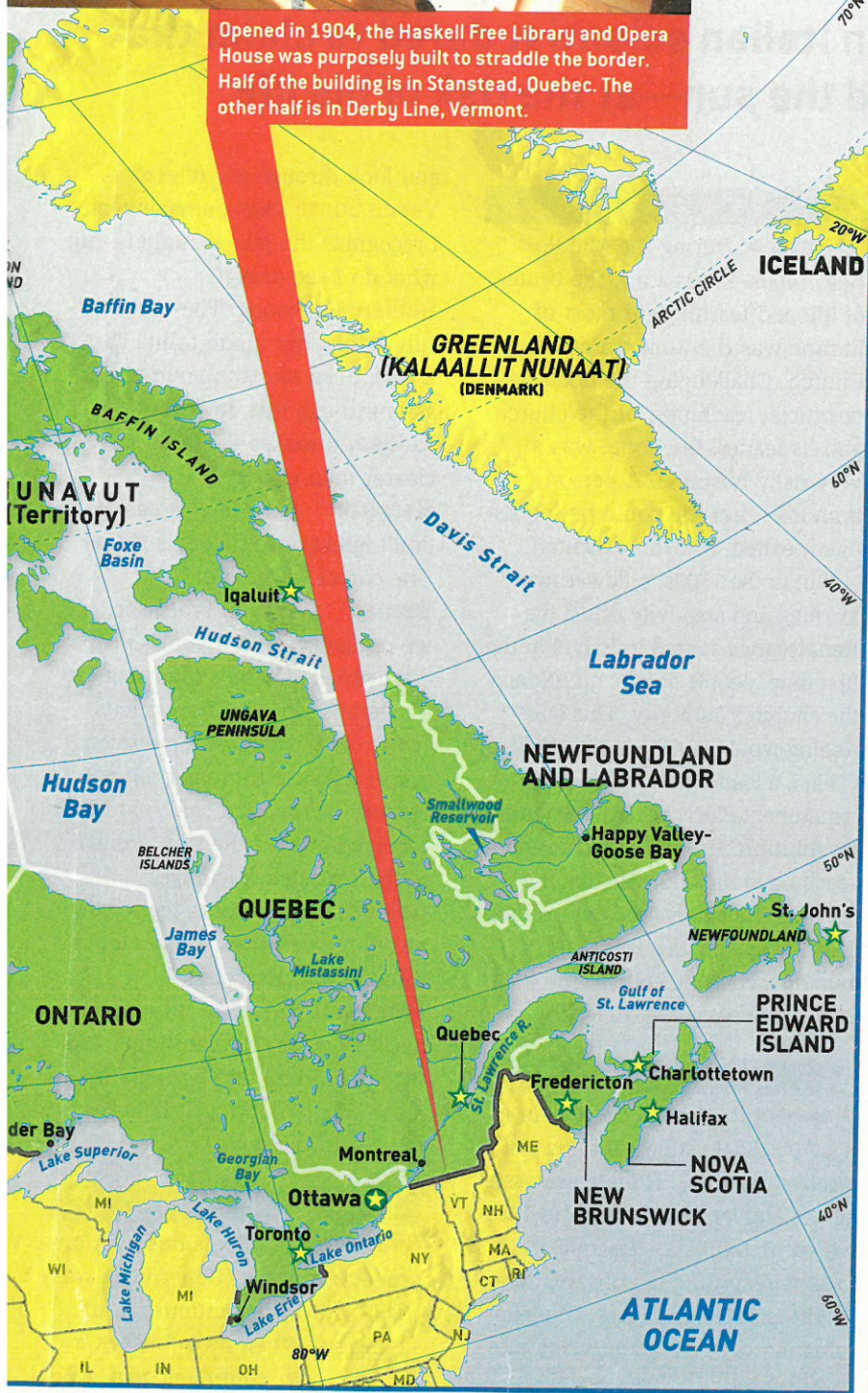
Questions

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What is the capital of Canada?
2. In which province is it located?
3. Canada has 10 provinces and how many territories?
4. What is the southernmost Canadian city shown on the map?
5. Which provinces border the U.S.?
6. Nunavut was created to give the Inuit (Eskimo) more of a voice in Canada's government. What is its capital?
7. What is the approximate distance in miles between Resolute, in northern Canada, and the North Pole?
8. What geographic feature lies closest to 61°N, 140°W?
9. Which named line of latitude crosses the Davis Strait?
10. Should Canada have closed its borders to any or all of the American refugee seekers? Why or why not?



Colin Murphy, seated on the library's Canada side, peeks at the legs of his brother on the U.S. side of the line.



Opened in 1904, the Haskell Free Library and Opera House was purposely built to straddle the border. Half of the building is in Stanstead, Quebec. The other half is in Derby Line, Vermont.

AMERICA'S ESCAPE VALVE

For centuries, Americans have sought refuge in Canada. Here are three reasons why.

- **THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION:**

Loyalists (Americans who opposed separation from Great Britain) faced hostility and confiscation of their property during and after the Revolution, which ended in 1783. More than 40,000 Loyalists fled to British-held Canada, most after the war.

- **SLAVERY:** Before and during the Civil War (1861-1865), as many as 100,000 slaves escaped from the South through the Underground Railroad. Up to 30,000 traveled into Canada.



A U.S. slave seeks freedom in Canada in this 1862 drawing.

- **VIETNAM:** Widespread opposition to the war in Vietnam led tens of thousands of young men to avoid the draft (compulsory military service) in the 1960s by moving to Canada. Many settled there permanently.