

Canada: Marcel Makes a Sacrifice | Lesson Plan

What are the hidden costs of free healthcare?

Students will understand how a family's experience reveals the true costs of universal healthcare systems, while contrasting those outcomes with those of a privatized, competitive healthcare model.

Learning Objectives:

- Use a map to identify geographical features and the scale of Canada.
- Compare universal (single-payer) healthcare and privatized healthcare systems using evidence from the story.
- Analyze how policies intended to provide fairness can impose hidden costs.
- Reflect on how waiting for medical care can affect families emotionally and practically.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Universal healthcare:** A government-run system in which healthcare is provided to all citizens and paid for through taxes.
- **Single-payer:** A healthcare system where one entity (the government) pays for medical services using tax revenue.
- **Privatized healthcare:** A system where individuals and employers pay for healthcare through insurance and out-of-pocket costs.
- **Province:** A regional division of a country with its own government, similar to a state.
- **Rationing:** Limiting access to goods or services when demand exceeds supply.
- **Specialist:** A doctor who focuses on a specific area of medicine rather than general care.
- **Medical tourism:** Traveling to another country to receive medical treatment.
- **Monopoly:** When one entity controls a service or resource, limiting competition.

Educational Standards: CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.5, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.R.6

Academic Subject Areas: Civics, U.S. History, Western Civilization, Social Studies, Geography, Culture, Global Awareness

What You'll Need

- Video: *Around the World: Marcel Makes a Sacrifice* ([Watch Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Around the World: Marcel Makes a Sacrifice* (Click [Here](#))
- Map of Canada

Lesson Plan (Two 45-minute Class Periods)

Part 1: Reading the Book (25-30 min)

Scan to watch episode



Note to Teachers:

- Begin with a sustained, uninterrupted read-aloud of *Canada: Marcel Makes a Sacrifice* while students follow along on their devices or copies. This will take 25–30 minutes.
- This approach is intentional. It builds attention, allows students to absorb the narrative emotionally, and ensures everyone shares the same foundation before analysis begins.
- Encourage students to follow along with a pencil in hand and mark moments they find surprising, confusing, or important. After reading, allow a few moments for quiet reflection or discussion before beginning Part 2 of the lesson plan.

Part 2: Geography Focus (10-15 min)

- Activity: Use the **Geography Focus**—*Canada* section of the worksheet to guide students through a mapping and distance-estimation activity. Students will label Canada's provinces and territories, identify nearby countries and bodies of water, and use the map scale to estimate straight-line distances across Canada.
- Discuss the following questions:
 - How do Canada's oceans (Atlantic and Pacific) and the Hudson Bay influence where many people live and where major cities have developed?
 - Why might Ontario's location near the Great Lakes and the United States make it an important region for travel, trade, and immigration?
 - What challenges would distance and climate create when traveling across Canada?

Part 3: Vocabulary Focus and Sentence Writing (5-10 min)

- Vocabulary Focus: Introduce and define the key vocabulary terms listed in the worksheet, or have students research them in the book. Discuss how these terms show up in the story and impact the characters. You may choose to pre-teach these words or explore them after reading, using the worksheet section.

Part 4: Healthcare Systems and Tradeoffs (20-25 min)

- Activity: Use the **American vs. Canadian Healthcare Chart** in the worksheet to help students think through the complex issues surrounding healthcare. Suggested focus areas:
 - Universal / single-payer healthcare in Canada:
 - "Free" and designed for equal access (but paid through very high taxes)
 - Rationing (government-controlled distribution of limited goods) and long wait times for appointments, tests, specialists, and surgery
 - Doctor shortages (difficulty finding/keeping a family doctor)
 - Fewer specialists and limited access to high-tech machines (MRI/scans)
 - Government monopoly limits competition and can reduce innovation/availability
 - "Medical tourism": patients travel (often to the U.S.) to get faster care

- Story example: Alain’s surgery is scheduled 5.5 months out, even after being moved “to the front of the line.”
- Privatized Healthcare in the U.S.
 - Mostly insurance-based (often employer-supported); patients may pay fees/out-of-pocket
 - Access can vary—some people lack insurance, and care can be expensive
 - More specialists and faster access to tests/technology (MRI, scans, procedures)
 - Strong competition, and a major center for medical innovation and research, along with medical tourism.
 - Story example: Alain gets immediate surgery in Ohio after Marcel gives up his program spot.
- Small Group or Partner Work: Students identify comparisons using page 11 of the story to guide their reasoning. Teacher note: Help students by teaching through a couple of examples or by modeling on the whiteboard.
- Whole-Class Debrief: Guide a discussion using these questions:
 - What ‘true cost’ of universal healthcare impacted Marcel’s family the most? How?
 - Why didn’t “free” healthcare mean fast healthcare?
 - What did Marcel choose to give up for his dad?
 - Which costs were financial—and which were personal?
- Teacher Note: This activity and discussion help students see that many systems solve some problems while creating others, and that policy decisions always affect real people.

Part 5: Personal Reflection / Writing Activity (20-25 min)

- Activity: Have students complete the **Reading Comprehension and Personal Reflection** section of the worksheet. This portion reinforces key plot points and encourages students to think critically about the tradeoffs around healthcare systems like those in the U.S. and Canada.
- Teacher Guidance:
 - Review the comprehension questions aloud or in small groups to check understanding before students begin writing.
 - Encourage students to refer to specific moments from the story in their answers.
 - For the reflection prompt, give students quiet time to think before writing. Emphasize honesty and effort over length.
 - Optional: Invite volunteers to share their reflections with the class to build connection and discussion.

Don’t have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (25 minutes)

Step 1: Watch the *Around the World: Marcel Makes a Sacrifice* video together as a class.

Step 2: Lead a focused discussion using the following guiding questions:

- Which tradeoff had the biggest impact on Marcel’s family?

- Why didn't "free" healthcare mean fast healthcare?
- What did Marcel choose to give up for his dad?
- Which costs were financial—and which were personal?

Optional Extension: Distribute the worksheet and invite students to complete one or two sections independently—such as the Vocabulary Focus & Sentence Writing or the American vs. Canadian Healthcare System—as a follow-up or homework assignment.