



Canada Questions and Answers  
Everything You Need to Know About Canada



## Famous Canadians

*And Their Contribution to  
Building a Stronger and Better  
Society*

Presented by CanadaFAQ.ca

National identity and pride develop by comparing the history, culture, progress, and achievements of one nation to those of others. Heritage, culture, folklore, and traditions are the key elements distinguishing the citizens of one country from those of another. National heroes are ancestors whose contributions and valuable work give people a sense of pride and belonging.

### *From national heroes to “heroes of science”*

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The term hero refers to a person who is distinguished and admired for his noble qualities, abilities, courage, brave deeds, and heroic acts. Heroes are central figures that define periods of history and are regarded as benefactors of a nation and even of humankind. For everyone, national heroes are “the flesh and blood of national identities.”<sup>1</sup> They inspire faith and courage and shape choices and ideas of human excellence. Heroes define people’s ideas and aspirations and expand their sense of what humans can do.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of heroism had different meanings during different historical periods. The life, teachings, and deeds of prophets, priests, men of letters, and kings have defined our ideas of heroism. The post-WWI period, for example, witnessed the cult of the Unknown Soldier. It was the first time in history that public expressions of pain and grief were the result of massive war casualties. During the inter-war period, a hero was a person “whose ‘heroic death’ has rendered him meaningful in the eyes of society.”<sup>3</sup> Today, heroes are individuals whom others admire and who define the qualities many people want to possess. Heroes are people who strive to contribute to progress and human excellence. While the attainment of an ideal is often an impossible task, “the pursuit of its attainment is not just possible, but required.”<sup>4</sup>

### *Heroes of science and letters*

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The life, ideas, and work of today’s “heroes” reflect the spirit of progress toward human betterment. The famous people we read about inspire us and shape our ideas, values, ambitions, and choices in the same way that heroes did in the past. Successful people are noted for their special achievements in different fields – science, literature, art, politics, and sports. The personal example of famous people shapes generations, and every generation needs its heroes. Sometimes, however, young people admire “heroes” who happen to be the wrong heroes. As parents, we have the opportunity to tell the stories of those heroes and famous people who inspire and teach ideals such as justice, honor, virtue, honesty, courage, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Linas Eriksonas, *National Heroes and National Identities: Scotland, Norway, and Lithuania*, p. 15

<sup>2</sup> Scott LaBarge, *Heroism: Why Heroes Are Important*

<sup>3</sup> Eriksonas, p.33

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Flesher, *Heroes, Saints, and Ordinary Morality*, p.14

pursuit of excellence. People who are forward looking, motivated to bring in reform and change, and all those who inspire us to strive for excellence have stories to tell.

## *The stories of famous Canadians*

### *Scientists, Inventors and Astronauts*

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Science is important for human progress and promotes development. Scientific discoveries help to save lives, and our societies are built on technological and scientific discoveries. Science has enabled us to fly, move mountains, use different sources of energy, and cure once deadly diseases. Canadian scientists such as **Alexander Bell**, **Sidney Altman**, and **Richard Taylor** have contributed to scientific progress by discovering phenomena and processes and making important inventions.



**Alexander Bell**, for example, is one of the most renowned Canadian scientists who invented the telephone. His experiments and work helped to improve the phonograph, developed by Thomas Edison. Later inventions include the dehusking device (wheat husker), the precursor to air conditioning, the audiometer, which was intended to detect speech problems, the metal detector, and many others.

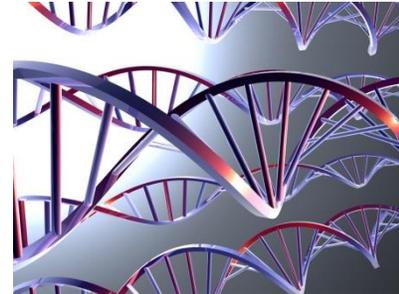
**Sidney Altman** is a Nobel Prize winner in chemistry who discovered that the RNA molecule has catalytic properties. His research efforts have been focused in the field of nucleic acid biochemistry. Altman is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and has been awarded the Novartis-Drew Award. **James Hillier** is another scientist who made an important invention – in 1938, he created the first electron microscope. Instead of focusing a beam of light, which has a larger wavelength of light, Hillier focused a beam of electrons, allowing for a greater depth of focus as well as for better magnification. His research work and efforts brought him many honors, including the IRI Medal and the Albert Lasker Award for Basic Medical Research.

The research work of **Richard Taylor** has been instrumental in the field of particle physics. Taylor was the first to verify the existence of gluons and up and down quarks. Together with **Henry Kendall** and **Jerome Friedman**, he was able to confirm that there were smaller particles than neutrons and protons.

**David Suzuki** is a name known to every Canadian. He is a Japanese-Canadian environmental scientist, science broadcaster, and popularizer. Suzuki advocates sustainable development on

earth and has brought attention to important issues such as global warming and climate change, the impact of pollution and industrial fishing on oceans, and protection and preservation of wildlife.

**Ernest McCulloch** is another renowned Canadian scientist and the first to identify stem cells, which made marrow transplants possible. His discovery may help treat a variety of ailments, including muscular dystrophy, Alzheimer's disease, spinal cord injuries, and Parkinson's disease. McCulloch's research efforts focused on malignant stem cells and the mechanisms that affect their growth on molecular and cellular levels.



### *Astronauts*

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Hundreds of spacecraft were launched into open space to help humankind enhance its knowledge about the universe. Space exploration makes further scientific progress possible by giving access to valuable information about the planets and moons in our solar system. Canadian astronauts such as Chris Hadfield and Marc Garneau contributed to the efforts to explore the laws of universe and learn more about open space.

**Chris Hadfield** is a Canadian astronaut and the recipient of many special honors and awards, including the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal and the Vanier Award. He is the first astronaut of Canadian origin to walk in space. **Marc Garneau**, a former astronaut and military officer, took part in 3 Space shuttle flights for NASA. He is the first Canadian in space and headed the CSA during the period of 2001-2006. **Roberta Bondar** is the first Canadian woman astronaut and the first neurologist aboard Discovery. She was awarded a number of special honors and awards and is known for her research of the nervous system.

### *Business*

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Business growth is important for prosperity and sustainable development. Businesses create resources and provide materials for the production of goods. Companies develop ideas and materials to enhance their resource base. They create jobs for workers, distributors, and suppliers and contribute to welfare. Businessmen such as Peter Munk, Jack Warner, and Timothy Eaton have helped to create productive jobs and contributed to economic security and social development.

**Peter Munk** is the founder and chairman of the world's largest gold mining company Barrick Gold. His foundation – the Peter Munk Charitable Foundation has launched a fundraising program in support of various initiatives to improve health and access to learning. **Jack Warner**, a Canadian producer, movie executive and former president of Warner Bros, worked with many celebrities of his time, including Humphrey Bogart, Bette Davis, and others.



**Max Aitken** is another successful businessman, press baron, and the Chairman of Beaverbrook Newspapers Ltd. As a member of Churchill's cabinet during the Second World War, Aitken increased production to support the war effort. In Canada, Aitken sponsored a variety of university and civic programs. **Robert Campeau**, a financier and a major player in the real estate industry, undertook a number of leveraged buyouts, built the Ottawa skyline, and took control of Federated Department Stores. Campeau will be remembered for his unorthodox approach to investment and for undertaking the largest takeovers in the history of the U.S.

**Timothy Eaton** is the founder of the Eaton's department store, the biggest private department store in Canada. Eaton introduced important concepts such as barter method and bargain, and cash sales. He also created airy and light workspaces for his employees. The founder of Saputo, Inc., **Lino Saputo** is another successful Canadian and a cheese magnate. He has donated money for various causes and to different organizations, such as the Saputo Stadium, which was built with private funds.

**Nat Taylor**, the first movie mogul of Canada, was a visionary, inventor, and the owner of International Studios. He produced several movies, including *Explosion* and *The Mask*, which is the first Canadian-made movie released in USA. **Jimmy Pattison**, a Canadian businessman and entrepreneur, is the owner and managing director of the Jim Pattison Group, which has investments in Australia, the United States, Europe, Mexico, and Canada. The company operates in different industries, including financial services, car dealerships, real estate development, and others. Patterson stood on the 2010 Vancouver Olympics committee and is the recipient of many awards, including the Order of Canada.

**John Roth** has been recognized as one of the most powerful people in networking and is the former CEO and chairman of Nortel Networks. Roth is a co-chairman of the voluntary initiative E-Business Opportunities Roundtable while Nortel Networks spent millions of dollars to improve the science education facilities at different schools around Canada. Former politician and businesswoman **Belinda Stronach** was the executive vice-chairman of the automobile supplier Magna International. The Belinda Stronach Foundation works in cooperation with businesses, governmental bodies, non-government organizations, and individuals, aiming to promote civic involvement, education, and health.

### *Famous painters and authors*

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Artists, poets, and painters are a source of inspiration, meaning, and truth. Art makes us reflect and enables us to see humankind, human life, and the world from a different perspective. Artists raise questions and help people to sense meanings and use their creative impulses in the best way possible. Artists such as Yann Martel, Paul Kane, and Carol Shields have shown us that the world of imagination is boundless.

**Carol Shields**, for example, is a Canadian author and the winner of the U.S. Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, the Orange Prize, and the Arthur Ellis Award. She is the author of short stories, novels, and Jane Austin's biography. Her novel *The Stone Diaries* was shortlisted for the National Book Critics Circle Award and won a Pulitzer Prize. Shields once said in an interview that Canada was a good place to write because the country didn't have a long literary tradition. You are not overwhelmed or intimidated by names like Faulkner or Hemingway. Heroes are not an integral element of literary tradition, reflecting the idea that people deserve to be equal.

**Arthur Hailey** is a famous Canadian novelist whose novels portray ordinary people going through ordeals. More than 170,000,000 copies of his novels have been sold. The list of his novels includes *Airport*, *Hotel*, *The Final Diagnosis*, and *Overload*, and many of them have been made into TV series and films.



**Margaret Atwood** is a famous Canadian essayist, novelist, and poet. Her works include *Life before Man*, *The Blind Assassin*, and *Cat's Eye*. She has received numerous honorary degrees and awards, including the Booker Prize. Atwood is the author of many volumes of non-fiction and fiction, children's literature, and poetry. Her short stories have been published in magazines such as *Saturday Night*, *CBC Anthology*, *Tamarack Review*, and others. Atwood is a leading woman novelist whose works focus on women's issues. She campaigns for environmental protection and human rights.

**Yann Martel** is also a Canadian author and the winner of the 2002 Man Booker Prize for his novel *Life of Pi*. *Life of Pi* is considered a transformative and highly original novel that takes readers on a spiritual adventure and reflects on serious questions like what it means to live and believe. Other works by Martel include *Beatrice and Virgil*, *Self*, and *Seven Stories*.

**W.O. Mitchell** is a Canadian writer, best known for his *Jake and the Kid* stories, featured on CBC radio, and novels such as *Who Has Seen the Wind* and *The Vanishing Point*. *Who Has Seen the Wind* is considered a classic prairie novel and one of Mitchell's best-loved books. Mitchell

explores themes such as loneliness, intellectual and spiritual growth, life on the prairie, and bringing people closer to one another.

### *Canadian painters*

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The list of famous Canadian painters is long and includes artists such as Paul Kane, Christopher Pratt, the Group of Seven, Paul-Émile Borduas, and many others. **Paul-Émile Borduas** is a Canadian painter who is famous for his abstract and automatist paintings. The Vancouver Art Gallery and the National Gallery of Canada feature his works of art.

**Paul Kane** is a Canadian painter famous for his oil paintings and the bestseller *Wanderings of an Artist Among the Indians of North America*. Kane is known for his paintings of Native Americans



and is regarded as one of the most influential ethnologist artists, along with John Stanley, Charles King, and George Catlin. **Christopher Pratt** is another renowned Canadian painter whose works are featured in many museums and private collections in Europe and across North America. The artist touches upon a variety of themes, from boats and waterscapes to architectural details and cityscapes. His paintings combine abstract elements, simplicity,

and memories of events and places.

**The Group of Seven** include **Franklin Carmichael**, **Frederick Varley (F.H. Varley)**, **Lawren Harris**, **Alexander Jackson (A.Y. Jackson)**, **Frank Johnston**, **Arthur Lismer**, **James MacDonald (J.E.H. MacDonald)**. They were landscape artists who often painted together and had a profound influence on many Canadian artists. Their works can be found in different galleries across the country, including the, Art Gallery of Ontario, McMichael Canadian Art Collection and the National Gallery of Canada.

**Franklin Carmichael** was the youngest member of the Group. Carmichael created illustrations for magazines and is famous for his watercolors. **Lawren Harris** is known for his abstract paintings and landscapes. Among his paintings are *Beaver Swamp*, *Algoma Waterfall*, *Black Birch and Maple*, and *Blue and White*. **Alexander Jackson**, a member of the Group of Seven, was one of the founders of the Canadian Group of Painters. He was a war artist and a modernist painter. **Frank Johnston** was a commercial artist who is famous for his landscape paintings. He contributed 60 works to the Algoma show of 1919. **Arthur Lismer** was a Canadian war artist and painter who created a successful art program for children. He is known for his cartoon drawings of artists and paintings such as *Bright Land* and *A September Gale Georgian Bay*. **James MacDonald** is painter and writer famous for his landscape paintings. He loved Japanese and Chinese art and wrote poetry. **Frederick Varley** was a Canadian painter and war

artist who painted landscapes and portraits. He painted many landscapes in watercolor and oil and travelled to Russia, the Arctic, and other remote areas. **Emily Carr** is a Canadian artist whose paintings recreate the rituals and life of native Americans. She is a post-impressionist artist who painted forest landscapes and focused on aboriginal themes. **Tom Thomson** is a famous Canadian landscape artist and one of the most influential painters of his time. He was not a member, but his work inspired the formation of the Group of Seven. Major paintings by Thomson include *The Jack Pine* and *Northern River*.

## *Musicians*

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Music documents cultural and social changes in our society, brings people together, and communicates ideas and meanings. Music enables us to recall happy and special moments that are sweet to us. Music helps us to grieve, cope with stress, and overcome sadness. Musicians like Nelly Furtado, Celine Dion, Leonard Cohen, and Diana Krall help us to recollect, cope, and feel.

**Nelly Furtado** is a Canadian songwriter and signer who won the Latin Grammy and the Grammy Award in 2002. Her album *Loose* reached #1 in the German, Canadian, and U.S. charts. Songs like *Say it right*, *Maneater*, and *Promiscuous*, included in this album, became hits around the world. In 2006, Furtado took part in a concert that aimed to raise awareness of AIDS. The concert was hosted by Nike, MTV, and BET, and musicians such as Snoop Dogg and Enrique Iglesias took part in it. Her discography includes several albums, among which *The Spirit Indestructible*, *Loose*, and *Folklore*.

**Alanis Morissette** is a Canadian songwriter, singer, and actress whose songs explore themes like loneliness, reconciliation, and redemption. Her album *Under Rug Swept* went platinum, and she won 7 Grammy Awards and 16 Juno Awards. **Avril Lavigne** is a Canadian singer who became the youngest female singer to reach #1 in the United Kingdom. Her album *Let Go* went platinum, and she has won numerous awards, including the MTV European and MTV music awards and the Fan Choice Award. The singer is involved in a number of charitable organizations such as Camp Will-a-Way and Erase MS.

**Celine Dion** is a Canadian singer who has won many Juno and Felix awards. She won the Eurovision Song Contest in 1988, and her song *Beauty and the Beast* received an Academy Award and a Grammy Award. Dion supports the World Children's Day, along with many politicians, sportsmen, and celebrities. A famous Canadian singer, **Diana Krall** has produced many platinum and gold albums. The Grammy-winning artist has performed and recorded with many artists, including American singer Anthony Benedetto and bebop jazz guitarist Russell Malone.

**Shania Twain** is a pop singer who has received a number of Grammy and other awards. More than 17,000,000 copies of her album *Come On Over* were sold, and it contained several hits, including *You're Still the One*. Canadian musician, guitarist, and novelist **Leonard Cohen** examines themes like relationships, loneliness, depression, and religion. Cohen explores Jewish cultural and religious images and themes in songs like *Story of Isaac*. He received a Grammy award, and his composition *Hallelujah* sold in over 5 million copies.

**Neil Young** is a famous Canadian musician who released 34 albums and directed many movies. He has experimented with rockabilly, jazz, swing, blues, and other styles. His song *Let's Roll* is dedicated to the people who lost their lives on Flight 93 and all victims of the 9/11 attacks. **Bryan Adams** is a Canadian producer, guitarist, and rock singer who has 4 number 1 hits. Adams has won many American Music, MTV, and Juno awards. The Bryan Adams Foundation provides support and financial assistance to disadvantaged people and provides grants to associations, trusts, and organizations that work to advance learning opportunities. **Justin Bieber** is a Canadian actor and musician with a successful music career. Bieber has performed with other celebrities such as Chris Brown and Rihanna.

### *Movie stars*

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Movies are of various sorts – documentaries, drama, fiction, love stories, action movies, and comedies. They help us witness the life, hardships, and happy moments of others, teach us important lessons, and entertain us. Movie stars such as Keanu Reeves, William Shatner, and Michael J. Fox star in movies that can change our perception of human nature, society, and humankind.

**Michael J. Fox** is a Canadian producer and actor who starred in a number of feature films, including *Spin City*, the remake of *Don't Drink the Water*, and *Poison Ivy*. He created the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. The foundation aims to speed treatments that help to reverse, stop, and slow the progression of the disease. **William Shatner** is a Canadian film director, actor, and musician who guest-starred on many TV series, including *Ironsides* and *Marcus Welby, M.D.* He is famous for his roles on *Boston Legal* and has recorded several albums. Shatner also directed a couple of projects and wrote many books. He received 2 Emmy Awards and the People's Choice Award. The role of James Kirk in *Star Trek* has brought him worldwide fame. **Donald Sutherland** is another Canadian actor with a long career and valuable contributions. He is a prolific actor who starred in many films such as *Ordinary People* and *JFK*.

**Kim Cattrall** is a Canadian actress who starred in *Sex and the City*, *Hold-Up*, and *City Limits*. The actress became an international celebrity and won Theatre Actress of the Year, Golden Globe,

and other awards. Known for her role in *The Matrix trilogy*, **Carrie-Anne Moss** starred in *Red Planet* with Terence Stamp. She received the Independent Spirit Award for her role in *Memento*. **Pamela Anderson** is a Canadian actress, author, and model. She starred in *Barb Wire* and is the author of two novels: *Starstruck* and *Star* (a story about an ordinary girl becoming a celebrity). Anderson became famous for her roles in *V.I.P.* and the successful series *Baywatch*.

**Jim Carrey** is a Canadian comedian and actor, best known for his leading roles in *The Mask* and *Dumb and Dumber*. He is world famous for his dramatic roles and mimicry skills, often plays losers, and was nominated for the MTV Generation Award and Choice Comedian. **Keanu Reeves** is another famous Canadian actor who became a celebrity with the release of *Speed*. Reeves has worked with Gus Van Sant, Coppola, Bertolucci, and other film directors. He took roles in big and small films and starred in *The Matrix* and *Johnny Mnemonic*.

## Sports



Sports draw people for a variety of reasons – competition, power, suspense, and talent. Sports provide recreation, build character, encourage good habits, and offer opportunities for personal growth. Players such as Wayne Gretzky, Marilyn Bell, and Cindy Klassen teach us the values of losing and winning, trying again, and achieving excellence.

**Wayne Gretzky** is a head coach for the Phoenix Coyotes and an ice hockey player, considered the best player of all times. He played as an underage player with the junior hockey team Peterborough Petes. Gretzky became NHL's leading point-scorer and won the Hart Trophy 8 consecutive years. **Kurt Browning** is a skater who represented Canada on the 1994, 1992, and 1988 Winter Olympics. He is a world-class athlete who won gold medals in 1989, 1990, and 1991. Browning was voted Male Athlete of the Year in 1990. **Cindy Klassen** is a long track speed skater and the first Canadian sportswoman who won 5 medals at the Winter Olympics, following Eric Heiden, Roald Larsen, and Clas Thunberg. She was named Canadian Press Female Athlete in 2007 and 2005. Klassen has won 39 individual medals and is the recipient of many awards and trophies.

**Bobby Orr** is also a Canadian hockey player known for revolutionizing professional hockey. He won 2 scoring titles and received 8 Norris Trophies. **Jacques Villeneuve** is a Quebec-born automobile racing driver, champion, and one of the most intriguing figures in sport. He is the

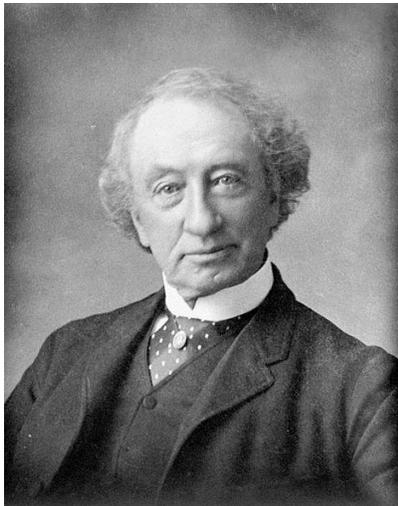
youngest racer to win the PPG IndyCar World Championship, and he won several championships, including the Formula One World Championship in 1997. The list of famous Canadians will not be complete if **Marilyn Bell** was left out. She is the youngest swimmer to swim the English Channel and the first to swim Lake Ontario.

**Terry Fox** is a cancer research activist and athlete who ran across Canada to raise funds for cancer research. The Terry Fox Foundation organizes the Terry Fox Run and raises money in support of discovery-based research. The foundation raised over \$600 million through donations, the National School Run Day, and the Terry Fox Run, held every year.

## *Politicians*

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Politicians are indeed important members of society – they propose policies, vote on bills, and make important decisions that affect many aspects of our lives. Politicians are responsible for providing public service and addressing issues such as violence, poverty, and unemployment. Politicians such as Pierre Trudeau, John A. Macdonald, and Alexander Mackenzie are the ones who helped to make Canada a prosperous and stable country.



**John A. Macdonald** is the first Canadian Prime Minister who helped to unify New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Lower and Upper Canada. Macdonald was a strong supporter of the British North America Act and introduced policies to protect manufacturing. As a Prime Minister, **Alexander Mackenzie** created the Royal Military College and the Supreme Court. He built the Intercontinental Railway and reformed the electoral system. As the fifteenth Prime Minister, **Pierre Trudeau** strove to liberalize and reform laws and supported the enactment of the Canadian Charter of Rights and the Official Languages Act. He introduced multicultural policies to recognize and promote cultural diversity. **Ellen Fairclough** (a cabinet minister and the first woman to serve in cabinet), **Lester B. Pearson** (a diplomat and statesman who established the UN Emergency force in response to the Suez Canal Crisis), and **Stephen Harper** (Canada's current Prime Minister) are other politicians whose work and efforts have contributed to promoting liberty, creating jobs, and fostering political stability.

Canadian scientists, authors, artists, sportsmen, and politicians have made important contributions to social progress. They help bring reform, contribute to societal decisions, make important inventions, and are a source of inspiration and pride for millions of people.

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