

2. Battered Suitcases

This activity allows students to think about the past and people's lives through the metaphor of a "battered suitcase."



Materials Needed:

Old, battered suitcases or photos
Writer's Notebooks or Journals

Locate some old, battered suitcases from a thrift store or through donations. Use photos if actual suitcases are not available.

Display the battered suitcases/photos at each table group or around the classroom.

Allow students to examine the suitcases and make predictions in their table groups as to:

- Where did the suitcases come from?
- Why are they in Canada now?
- To whom do the suitcases belong?
- How did they get so battered?
- What hardships might the owner of the suitcases have experienced?
- What joys might the owner of the suitcases have experienced?
- Are the suitcases part of a set? Are there more that belong with it? Where are they now?
- Could the owner have been a refugee, escaping from a country where he/she was denied basic human rights?
- What might have been carried in the suitcases?
- Do you think the owner could have fit all his/her possessions in the suitcases?
- Do you think that the boy in the poster could fit all his possessions in one of the suitcases?

After students have the opportunity to discuss these questions in their table groups, ask students to write in their Writer's Notebooks or Journals about the owner of the suitcases. Students should tell the story of the owner of the suitcases and explain what he/she may have gone through.

Direct students to really think about the life challenges the owner may have encountered and to suggest reasons why the owner no longer needs those suitcases.