

INTRODUCTION

Our Worldviews

Who Are You?

identity: an individual's perception of who he or she is; a sense of self. A person may have many identities, depending on the groups to which he or she belongs.

How would you describe yourself and what is important to you? What are your beliefs about the world? How do you define who you are? What groups do you feel a part of? Are there groups you belong to that you don't really feel a part of?

It is natural to try to understand how you fit into the world you live in. You may be trying to sort out what is most important to you. You may be wondering what you want to become as you grow and mature into an adult. You may be puzzled by the ideas and beliefs of some of the new people that you meet; you may be excited by other new ideas. Looking at the ideas, beliefs, and actions of the people around you can help you understand the way they view the world. You can compare your beliefs and attitudes to theirs and examine how your ideas agree or disagree with theirs. You are establishing your **identity**.

Cathedral of Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico



Hola. My name is Elena. I'm from Mexico City. My family is mestizo, from a mixture of Spanish and Aztec ancestors. I enjoy living in a historic city and seeing the old Spanish architecture, such as our central cathedral and the old Aztec temples and artifacts that are found all over the city. My older brothers and sisters come home for important holidays; we celebrate with traditional foods that often include beans and chiles.

What Is Worldview?

Worldview is a collection of **values** and **beliefs** about life and the universe that is common to a group of people. The worldview of the group you identify with is the basis for the way you act, the way you react, and the way you feel about the world.

Worldview often is not obvious. You are immersed in it. It is so natural a background that you usually do not think about it. You can compare worldview to the atmosphere you breathe. The air around you is such a natural part of life that you do not usually even think about it. The worldview within which you live is like that — it is always there, behind the scenes, affecting the decisions and actions you make.

value: a moral standard or principle of behaviour of a person or group; a personal or group judgment as to what is important or valuable in life

belief: something accepted as true

Venice, Italy



Ciao. My name is Sergio and I live in Venice, an ancient trading city located on some islands along the northeast coast of Italy. I love the many statues, old buildings, and beautiful paintings that are found everywhere in my neighbourhood. Going to church is important to me. I also volunteer to hand out pamphlets to the many tourists who come to see our canals, buildings, and art.

Tokyo, Japan



Konnichi wa. My name is Keiko. I live with my parents and brother in busy Tokyo. Centuries ago, the city was called Edo and grew around Edo Castle, which you can still see today in downtown Tokyo. I love the mix of traditional Japanese life with the ultramodern. I believe in respect for family and I love traditional arts like kabuki theatre and sports like sumo. At the same time, we have the latest technology in things like computers, televisions, and video games.

What are some of your values and beliefs that might illustrate a Canadian worldview?

society: a group of people linked by common activities or interests and sharing a location; a group of humans defined by mutual interests, shared institutions, and a common culture

Western world: societies that are based on the worldview that developed in Western Europe

What Are Some Examples of Worldview?

The two illustrations on this page contain a few of the values and beliefs of two distinct worldviews. Are any of these values and beliefs similar to values and beliefs in your **society's** worldview?

A Traditional Worldview of Some Aboriginal People in Canada

Elders are respected for their wisdom.

Governing is through group agreement, not through the control of a leader.

All life is sacred and equally important.

People are connected to the community and to ancestors.

Human experience includes spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental aspects.

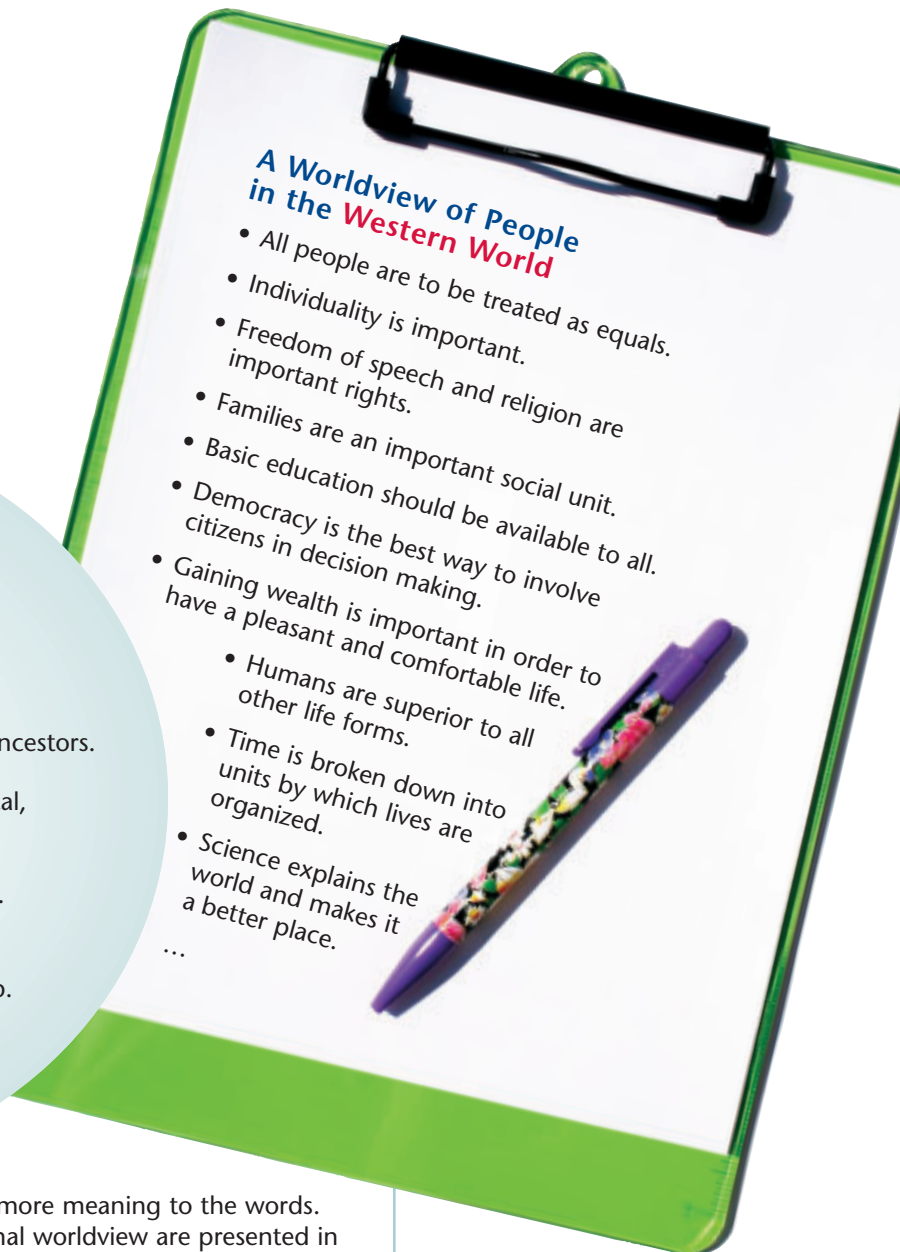
Life is a circle; time moves through cycles.

All forms of life are connected in a constantly changing, balanced relationship.

The well-being of the Earth is essential for our and our children's survival.

...

The way information is presented often adds more meaning to the words. The values and beliefs of a traditional Aboriginal worldview are presented in a circular shape, representing a worldview that includes ideas of wholeness and seeing life as full of cycles. Western worldview is often described as linear (going from the beginning to the end in a straight 1–2–3 way) and analytical (concerned with individual details). Why do you think the values and beliefs associated with the Western worldview are presented as they are?



Where Do You Belong?

Your daily life and identity are affected by the common worldview of people in Canada that has grown out of the Western worldview. As Canadians, we have some common values and beliefs in our approaches to medical care, education, and the arts that reflect a Canadian worldview different from other countries. What does the relationship between the Canadian government and its citizens show about a Canadian worldview? What does Canada's view of its relationship with the rest of the world show about its worldview? Do we have a common view of how we as Canadians should act towards the rest of the world?

Images in **collages** are carefully chosen and placed to support particular ideas. The images here were chosen to represent different regions of Canada and different images of life across the country. Images might be positioned to show similarities or sometimes to emphasize contrasting ideas. The relative size and placement of an image can indicate its importance in relation to the other images. Why might the Canadian flag in this collage have been presented in this location and at this size compared to the other images?



I wonder ... where do I fit with Canadian worldviews?

Sweetgrass braid, an important symbol to many First Nations individuals. The diverse cultures of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit may be represented by many other symbols.



Franco-Albertan flag

Queen Elizabeth II,
Legislature grounds,
Edmonton

Canada is a land of regions; the region you live in, whether the mountains or the prairies, the Atlantic provinces or the North, or another area, affects the way you see the world. The people in each region may have a worldview that differs in some ways from that of people who live in other geographic regions.

You are also affected by the worldview of the group of Canadian citizens that you belong to:

- Many of Canada's Aboriginal citizens have worldviews based on their ties to the land and the way of life that comes from being its original inhabitants. Their oral traditions and their experiences of history after European arrival also add to their unique worldview. Many Francophones from countries around the world have added to the diversity of Canada's Francophones.
- Most of Canada's Francophones have common values and beliefs in their worldview based on their history in Canada as one of its two founding European nations. Elements of their worldview have been affected by their shared experiences of early Canadian exploration and settlement; a common language, French; and a defined place in Canada's laws and institutions that guarantee language and education rights across the country.
- Canada's citizens of British background also share a common worldview. It, too, comes from being one of the two founding European nations. Elements of this worldview have been affected by shared experiences, such as the exploration and settlement of the country; a common language, English; and the establishment of governmental, legal, and social systems that developed from the British model.



- Canada is also a **multicultural** nation. Canada has welcomed people from nations around the world to become Canadian citizens. These immigrants bring with them the worldviews of their particular group. As they become a part of Canadian society, they begin to understand the common Canadian worldview. When they become Canadian citizens, they adopt values and beliefs of the Canadian worldview into their original worldview.

multicultural: many cultures

perspective: a way of looking at the world; an interpretation of a particular event (often applied to a group's interpretation)

Ukrainian dancers, Whitkow, SK



Chinese Cultural Centre, Vancouver, BC



Sikh dancers at Vaisakhi celebration, Vancouver, BC

You, as an individual Canadian citizen, are affected by a number of worldviews that affect how you view and relate to the world. Think about how the **perspectives** of all the groups you are a part of — family, friends, church, cultural group, and so on — relate to your overall values and beliefs about the world.

I wonder ... what has worldview got to do with my life?

history: the total accumulation of the experiences of a people; a continuous chronological record of events; the study of past events

How Can You Find Out More About Worldview?

As you study the worldviews presented in this text, you will also be examining the values and beliefs that affect the way you live in Canada. You will explore how these affect the way you personally make decisions and the way you respond to people and ideas you encounter.

Examining a group's way of life can tell you about their worldview:

- what they think and believe about their purpose in life
- their relationships with fellow citizens and with strangers
- their relationship with the natural world

As you look at different parts of a society, you can begin to understand more about that society's worldview.

Sharing a **history** and background leads a society to develop a common way of looking at the world. The worldview of a society changes over time as the citizens share new experiences and meet new ideas.

Within the overall worldview of a society, groups of people, such as an extended family or a religious faith, may have unique values and beliefs that give them different perspectives of the world, based on their shared experiences. This doesn't mean that everyone in a group is alike and that everyone believes the same thing. An individual has much in common with other people in his or her community and country and whatever groups he or she might belong to. But each person also has individual views based on personal values and beliefs about his or her own life and place in the universe.

Worldview is a complex idea that can help you to understand yourself and what affects the choices and decisions you make. Knowing about worldview also helps you to understand why other people and groups with different worldviews make different choices and decisions.

Elements of Society Affected by Worldview

The way of life of a group of people is based upon their worldview. You can learn about the worldview of a society by looking at the **systems** its citizens have developed to organize the way they live and interact. Examining what the citizens of a society value and believe also reveals the foundations of their worldview.

Examining the following elements is one way of helping to define a worldview:

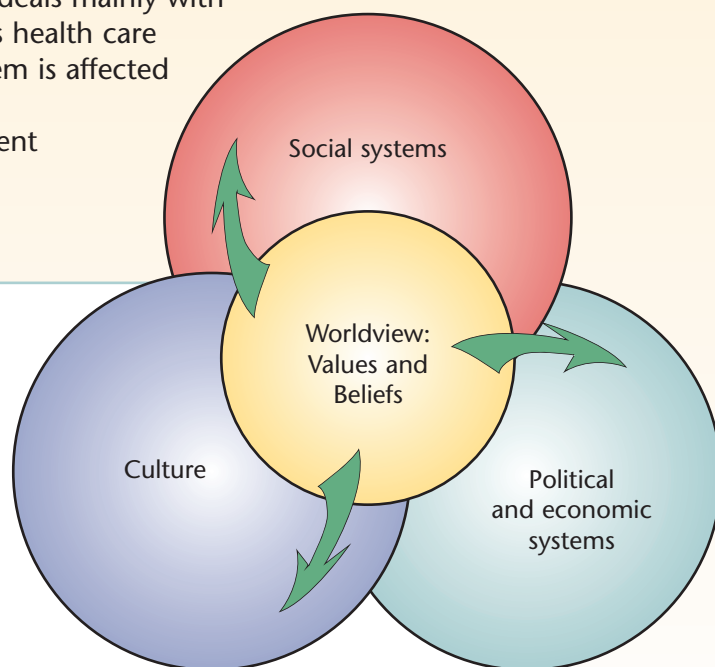
- Social systems — the organization and relationships among people, such as the types of education, medical, and social services a society provides
- Political and economic systems — political: relating to the way government is organized, the role of citizens in the government, and the rights given to individuals and groups; economic: relating to the methods by which people produce and distribute the goods and services they need
- Culture — the way of life of a group of people, including language, rules of behaviour, religion, spirituality, arts, literature, sciences, traditions, and other everyday aspects of life that can be observed

This diagram shows one way of looking at a society that can help you define its worldview. These elements are pictured separately for ease of discussion, but they are intertwined and interrelated in every society. It is often difficult to say where one element ends and another begins. For example, the economic system of a society deals mainly with distribution of **resources**. Social systems such as health care require resources to function, so this social system is affected by the economic system. The two elements are interrelated; often you cannot discuss one element without bringing in parts of the others.

system: a set of connected procedures, rules, or structures for dealing with some aspect of society; for example, a school system, a transportation system, a medical system

resources: the means available to a society to achieve a goal; for example, money, productive land, educated citizens

Worldview Affects the Way a Society Operates



Graphic organizers or models are often used to present complicated material in a way that is easier to understand. Often many details are left out. The model shown here represents the relationship between worldview and three of society's elements that it affects: social systems, political and economic systems, and culture. Note the placement of the circles and how they overlap; this shows that the elements often share details. A detail might fit under more than one of these elements. What does placing Worldview: Values and Beliefs at the centre suggest? What do you think the direction of the arrows is meant to show?

Factors Affecting Worldview

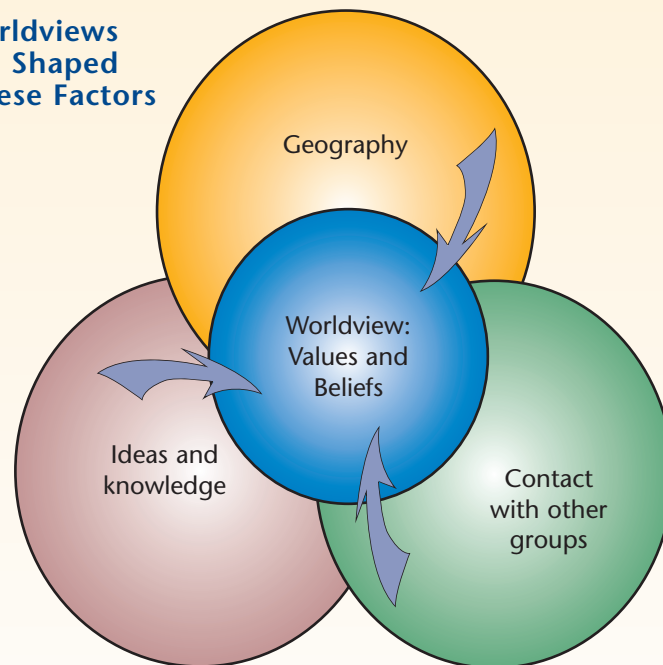
In the case studies in this text, you will learn how different factors influenced and caused changes in the societies and their worldviews.

- Geography — where a group lives: the climate, land formations, plants and animals, bodies of water, and natural resources
- Ideas and knowledge — what a group knows: the scientific, intellectual, technological, artistic, and spiritual knowledge of the times; the common understandings a group has, based on shared history
- Contact with other groups — who a group comes into contact with; contact and interactions between societies and between different groups in a society

Each case study in this text illustrates the worldview of a society at a certain time period in its history. The worldview of each society was, however, dynamic and changing. Usually, a change in worldview was very slow as the society gradually responded to the factors shown in the diagram. Sometimes, though, unexpected, earth-shattering events happened that shook the society to its core and caused the citizens to examine and change their worldviews quickly. What are some events in recent history that have quickly changed the way a society viewed the world?

I wonder ... are there other factors that shape worldview?

Worldviews Are Shaped by These Factors



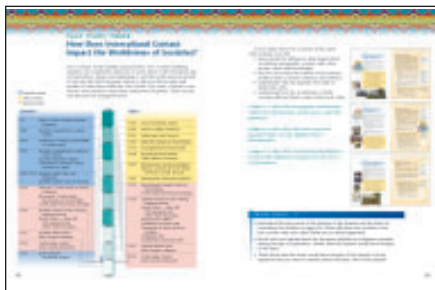
There are three case studies presented in the text. Each will illustrate different things about worldview. Chapter 10 will tie together the ideas you learned about in the case studies.



Case Study One: How Did the Exchange of Ideas and Knowledge During the Renaissance Shape the Worldview of the Western World?



Case Study Two: How Did Beliefs, Values, and Knowledge Shape the Worldview of Japan Between 1600 and 1900?



Case Study Three: How Does Intercultural Contact Impact the Worldviews of Societies?



Chapter 10: How Can Understanding Worldviews Improve Our Lives?

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Think about your own views about the world. What are your most important values and beliefs? How do they agree with the worldview of your society? Begin to make a pictorial representation of your worldview and the worldview of your society. A poster is one way to present your ideas. You might begin by using some of the ideas and beliefs you agree with that are presented in the sample Aboriginal and Western worldviews on page 4. Continue to add to your worldview picture throughout the year as you learn more about worldviews.
2. In a group, talk about what worldview means to you and your peers. Pick one of the values and beliefs from the sample worldviews that is also important to you. Explain to your group why it is meaningful to you.

I wonder ... what will the case studies show about worldview?

The **Think About It** feature introduces broad questions and activities to introduce a case study. They stimulate thinking. Most often, the questions will not have specific right-or-wrong answers.