

Two Canadas?

5.4.3
d

Read the following text with your partner and underline its main points.

Canada was once two Canadas - Upper Canada (later Canada West) and Lower Canada (later Canada East). The population of Upper Canada was mostly English-speaking, they were mostly of the Protestant religion, and most of them had beliefs and values that were based on British tradition. The population of Lower Canada was mostly French-speaking, mostly Catholic, and most of them had beliefs and values that were based on the traditions of France, but that had changed over several generations of living in Canada.

Some people say that this division is part of what defines Canada and Canadians to this very day. They say that Canada has always been "two solitudes": two groups of people who do not understand one another and do not speak to one another. The Canadian writer Hugh MacLennan wrote in 1945, "No single word exists, within Canada itself, to designate with satisfaction to both races a native of the country. When those of the French language use the word *Canadien*, they nearly always refer to themselves. They know their English-speaking compatriots as *les Anglais*. English-speaking citizens act on the same principle. They call themselves Canadians; those of French language French-Canadians."

The first sentence of Hugh MacLennan's novel *The Two Solitudes*, for which he won a Governor General's Award, begins with this sentence:

"Northwest of Montréal, through a valley always in sight of the low mountains of the Laurentian Shield, the Ottawa River flows out of Protestant Ontario into Catholic Québec."

(MacLennan, Hugh. *Two Solitudes*. Toronto: Popular Library Press, 1945, p. 9).

Discuss with your partner whether you think that Canada today is still "Two Solitudes", or two peoples who do not communicate with one another.

Do you think this is true of the Canada that you live in?

What about the Aboriginal peoples of Canada?

What about the many new immigrants to Canada?

What about the fact that Canada today is officially bilingual?



Write down your thoughts and be prepared to share your ideas with the class.