The Republic of Childhood: Imagining the Future
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Welcome to Imagining the Future!

For more than two decades, The Ottawa International Writers Festival has been bringing authors together with students across Ottawa. In 2017, the Festival launched a new initiative called “The Republic of Childhood” in order to bring more attention to the voices and stories of young people. This year, in celebration of the 30th anniversary of The Convention on the Rights of the Child, The Writers Festival has teamed up with Carleton University and The University of Ottawa to organize The Republic of Childhood Youth Forum, which will connect young writers with authors, researchers, and community members from Canada and across the world and invite them to exercise their rights to self-expression and participation.

In the writing workshops, student participants will be encouraged to think about their rights as young people, and explore a set of future challenges that will serve as the framework for the youth forum. Student participants will have the opportunity to have their work and their contributions to the forum published online so that their ideas and insights can be shared with policymakers, practitioners, and other researchers whose work impacts the lives of children and youth.

This Curriculum Guide is intended to provide authors, facilitators, teachers, and students with information about the themes of this year’s writing workshops. In the pages that follow, these themes are introduced and explained, and links to additional resources for learning and teaching about these themes are provided.
Using the Curriculum Guide

This guide is designed to introduce students, teachers, authors, and workshop facilitators to the key themes for the writers workshops.

Underlying the Future Challenges themes is the concept of children’s rights. The Republic of Childhood Youth Forum is intended to provide a space for children and youth to exercise their rights to self-expression and participation by sharing their perspectives on some of the most important issues in our society.

Along with information about children’s rights, this curriculum guide outlines four key Future Challenges: Health and Wellness, Environmental Change, Technology and Society, and Culture and Identity. Within each topic, there are different ideas and questions to consider, and links to web resources to provide additional information.

Student workshop participants are encouraged to identity one Future Challenge area that they are interested in and write with that topic in mind and, if they desire, share their insights in our Future Challenges discussions at the Youth Forum.
Imagining the Future

Key Concepts

- Children’s Rights
- Health and Wellness
- Environmental Change
- Technology and Society
- Culture and Identity
Children’s Rights

Children’s rights are human rights for children.

Human rights are basic standards to which every person is entitled, to survive and develop in dignity.

The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child is a treaty that recognizes specific rights for children. The Convention contains 54 articles that explain the basic human rights that all people under 18 are entitled to.

You can download PDF version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in child-friendly language from Unicef Canada.

Children’s Rights: The Three P’s

The articles are organized around three broad themes:

**Protection**

Children should be protected from harm.

**Provision**

Children should be provided with resources, like food, healthcare, and an education.

**Participation**

Children should participate in decisions that affect them; they should be listened to and respected.
Children’s Rights: Video Resources


Health and Wellness

Health means physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

Wellness means being able to make good choices about your own physical and mental health.

The way that we manage our health is changing because of new technologies, longer lifespans, and globalization, or the interaction of countries and people across the world.

Because of these changes, we have many new ideas about health issues like physical activity and nutrition, substance abuse, mental health, immunization, and the way that our environments affect our health.

Healthcare is changing rapidly. Because of technological innovations, the future of medicine could be more predictive, preventive, personalized, and participatory. But how will we make sure that everyone has access to effective and innovative healthcare?
Future Challenges: Health and Wellness

**Prevention**

How can we use technology to prevent illnesses?

Should we use DNA technology to predict and treat diseases?

How are our environments affecting our health?

**Provision**

How can we make sure that everyone has access to healthy environments and quality healthcare?

**Participation**

How can we make sure people can participate in important healthcare decisions?
Health and Wellness: Web Resources

1. Supporting Students' Mental Health. From the Council of the Ontario College of Teachers.

2. “Genetic Report Cards” Will Be the Future of Predicting Disease Risk.” We have the science to quantify our genetic fates, but should we?


Environmental Change

Our environments are changing. One way that is happening is through climate change, or rising global temperatures that have resulted in changes in rainfall, more floods and droughts, and more heat waves.

In Canada, climate change may have many effects, including:

- Melting permafrost in the north
- Rising sea levels
- More invasive species (pests that can harm people and the environment)
- More extreme weather
- Hotter summers and more forest fires

The climate determines almost everything about how we live, work, and play. We build our cities, factories, and highways to suit our climate. We are dependent on predictable weather patterns for our food supply.

https://climateatlas.ca/climate-change-basics
Future Challenges: Environmental Change

∗ Prevention

Can we prevent further effects of climate change?

∗ Provision

How will we meet the needs of society in a changing environment?

∗ Possibility

How will we adapt to changing and challenging environments?

∗ Participation

What is the role of children and youth in environmental awareness and activism?
Environmental Change: Web Resources

1. **What does climate change mean for Canada?** From Climate Atlas of Canada.

2. **Climate Action 150.** Students from 25 Canadian high schools investigate the impacts of climate change in their communities.

3. **A New Age of Space Exploration is Beginning.** Article from The Economist.

4. **Youth Leading the Way for Climate Justice.** From Bioneers, a nonprofit organization that promotes solutions to global environmental and bio-cultural challenges.
Technology and Society

Technology refers to tools and machines that help us solve problems and do new things.

Technology is an important part of our daily lives. We use technology to travel, communicate, learn, do business, produce food, and live in comfort.

Technology has important benefits for society. It has allowed us to travel, communicate, learn, and do business faster than ever before.

However, technology is changing society in ways that we do not yet understand. It affects how we relate to other people and our environment. It has also contributed to the pollution of the environment.

Technology has changed our everyday lives. We’re online, in one way or another, all day long. Our phones and computers have become reflections of our personalities, our interests, and our identities. They hold much that is important to us.

James Comey
Future Challenges: Technology and Society

Protection

How can we protect our privacy when we are sharing so much personal information online?

How can we stop uses of technology that are harmful to people?

Possibility

How will artificial intelligence (A.I.) change society?

Participation

Should we make sure everyone has access to technology?

Is social media actually making us less social and more lonely?
Technology and Society: Web Resources

1. Cutting back on Facebook or Snapchat will make you less depressed, study says. From CNBC.

2. What is Artificial Intelligence? A 5-minute video explaining AI.

3. Class Dojo raises concerns about children's rights. Short interactive article from The Conversation.

Culture and Identity

**Culture** means a way of life of a group of people - their beliefs, behaviours, and values. Our **identity** refers to the characteristics that make us who we are and distinguish us from other people.

Our beliefs, behaviours, and values are different depending on our own experiences and they are constantly changing. For example, the way that we think and talk about issues like race, gender, indigeneity, and equality has changed a lot over the last several decades, and this is reflected in our practices, like our school curriculum and our laws. Our ideas about art have also changed as technology has given us new forms of creative expression.

At the same time, many people still face discrimination because of their identity. And many important parts of our past, like Indigenous languages and artifacts, are at risk of being lost or forgotten.

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Our changing society has allowed for new ways of understanding ourselves and others. At the same time, languages, traditions, and artifacts are disappearing. We are gaining new perspectives on who we are but are we also losing important perspectives that could help us solve future challenges?
Future Challenges: Culture and Identity

Protection

How can we recognize the rights of Indigenous people to their own laws and national identities?

Possibility

What is the future of art in a digital world?

Participation

How can we continue to work for gender and racial equality in all parts of our lives?

How are the experiences, knowledges, and aspirations of Indigenous peoples in Canada essential to our future?
Culture and Identity: Web Resources

1. **Gender equality in budgeting: how Canada can learn from Sweden.** From CBC News: The National.


3. **The Future of Art.** Artist Trevor Pagan considers the changing landscape of visual art.

4. **Trans rights legislation in Canada.** Overview of federal legislation, with animated video.

5. A short video on valuing Indigenous knowledges in research. From SSHRC.