Imagine you are planning a trip to Vancouver. Around 1850, the quickest way to travel from Halifax to Vancouver was to take a ship around the coast of South America, a journey that took months (see map on page H 15). Even going from Toronto, Ontario, to St. John’s, Newfoundland, could take weeks.

The political map of North America was different than it is today. North of the United States, there were seven British colonies, one British government territory, and two large areas controlled by the Hudson’s Bay Company. These areas had little to do with one another. There was little trade between them, and their populations were small.

Why might such remote colonies consider forming a united country?

Historians study how things change over time. They not only describe the great events of history, but they also explore the background factors that led to these events. In this chapter, you will examine some of the similarities and differences between the colonies. You will learn why these colonies later formed the new country of Canada.
Questions to Consider as You Read this Chapter

You will explore these aspects of the Unit 1 Big Idea: Why did some of the colonies put aside differences and create a new country—Canada?

- What were the key social, physical, political, and economic characteristics of the British North American colonies between 1850 and 1860?
- What were the regional interests of each colony before the formation of Canada?
- Why is it important to use appropriate vocabulary when referring to historical events?

Taking Notes to Compare and Contrast

Use a chart like the one shown below to help you record facts about each of the colonies. Some boxes will have more than one point, and some will be left blank. Remember that a “feature” is a characteristic, or trait.

At the end of this chapter, you will be asked to put your notes into a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the differences and similarities between the British North American colonies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colony</th>
<th>Physical Features</th>
<th>Political Features</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Economic Features</th>
<th>My Thoughts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Did you know that approximately 5 million people live in the Greater Toronto Area? That is about twice the number of people who lived in all of British North America in the 1850s. Then, people were spread out across the vast landscape. Historians have uncovered a lot of information about them.

The first survey of British North America’s population was the census of 1851. After that, a population census was taken every 10 years until 1956, when it was changed to every five years. This table shows the distribution of people in 1851.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colony (or Region)</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage of BNA’s Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland</td>
<td>101,600</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>276,854</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>193,800</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>56,878</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada East (part of Québec today)</td>
<td>890,261</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada West (part of Ontario today)</td>
<td>952,004</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rupert’s Land and the Northwest Territories</td>
<td>5700</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Caledonia</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,532,097</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 1861 census showed that the population of British North America was 3,229,633. The population was overwhelmingly of British origin, as the following pie chart shows.
This pattern varied from region to region. People of French origin were the majority in Canada East. In Canada West and the Maritimes, people of British origin were predominant. In the Prairies, First Nations people and the Métis were the largest groups. There were also some British and French fur traders living there. In British Columbia, the largest groups were people of British and American origin who had been attracted by a series of gold rushes.

**Miners wait their turn to register their claims to gold-mining sites. Think of three questions you would like to ask the men in this photo.**

**The Great Migration**

One factor that contributed to the population diversity was a mass migration of people from Europe in the 1830s and 1840s. Poverty and food shortages drove thousands of people to emigrate, many coming to what is now Canada. This increased the ethnic diversity of British North America. People from the Netherlands and Germany settled here. Others came here from Ireland because of the Great Irish Famine, when disease destroyed the country’s main crop, potatoes. Many of the Irish who came were Roman Catholic and were hostile to Britain, but conditions in their homeland were so poor they needed to move in order to survive. You will read more about the Irish immigrants in Chapter 2.

**Environmental Milestones**

**Diversifying Crops**

In the early 1840s, potatoes were the staple food in Ireland. A strain of potato known as the “lumper” was the most popular because it gave a high yield. In 1845, a fungus infected the lumper potato. For three years in a row, the potato crop failed. In the resulting famine, thousands of Irish people starved. Others emigrated to North America. It was an environmental disaster that might have been avoided by growing a wider variety of crops.

**WORDS MATTER**

- **gold rush** a mass movement to an area where gold has been discovered
- **emigrate** leave one’s country to settle elsewhere
The Underground Railroad

Another factor contributing to diversity was the Underground Railroad. Slavery had been illegal in British North America since 1833. About 30,000 American slaves escaped to Canada West and Nova Scotia. The secret network that helped runaway slaves was called the Underground Railroad.

Mary Ann Shadd, a prominent member of the organization, was born as a free black woman (not a slave) in Delaware, a small state in eastern U.S.A. She later settled in Windsor, Canada West, where she wrote a pamphlet called *A Plea for Emigration*. She called on all free people to assist American slaves to settle in British North America. She wrote:

> In Canada as in recently settled countries, there is much to do, and comparatively few for the work... If a coloured man understands his business, he receives the public patronage the same as a white man.

Harriet Tubman was born as a slave in Maryland in the U.S. She escaped to Canada West where she became involved in the Underground Railroad, helping other slaves escape. Between 1850 and 1860, she made 19 secret trips to the American South. She risked her life helping approximately 70 people reach freedom in Canada West. Slave owners put a bounty of $40,000 (the equivalent of $750,000 today) on her head. Anyone capturing her could claim the bounty when they turned her over to the police. She wrote:

> There was one of two things I had a right to—liberty or death. If I could not have one, I would have the other for no man should take me alive.

Life in British North America was generally better for escaped slaves than the life they had come from; however, they were not always welcomed by white society. Many black people lived in separate communities rather than in established towns and villages.
The First Nations

Historians do not know exactly how many First Nations people were living in the colonies at this time. This is largely because First Nations people often lived on the fringes of settler society. They had once been valued allies of the British in the fight against the Americans and important suppliers of furs to the Hudson’s Bay Company. However, there had been peace with the Americans for 50 years, and the significance of the fur trade was declining.

The census of 1871 records 23,037 First Nations people in the population of Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. This figure probably underestimates the true figure because census officials did not consider it important to get an accurate count of all the First Nations people of the colonies. Why do you think the officials did not consider this important?

First Nations leaders realized they were no longer treated as friends and allies. Little Pine, chief of the Garden River Ojibwe near Sault Ste. Marie, wrote a letter to the governor of Canada in 1849:

...you have become a great people, whilst we have melted away like snow beneath an April sun; our strength is wasted, our countless warriors dead, our forests laid low, you have hounded us from every place as with a wand, you have swept away all our pleasant land, and like some giant foe you tell us “willing or unwilling, you must go from amid these rocks and wastes.”

WEB LINK
For more information on First Nations in the 1800s, visit our Web site.

THINKING It Over

1. Look at the 1851 population table on page H 6 and write down two general observations you can draw from it about where the people of British North America settled. Use your “My Thoughts” section to help you.

2. Summarize the cultural makeup of the colonies’ population at the beginning of the 1860s.

3. How does learning about the population and people of British North America give you a better understanding of British North America compared to Canada today?
What are your responsibilities at home and at school? How do you think your life would be different if you lived in British North America?

**Everyday Life**

In the 1850s, roles were usually organized by gender. Women were responsible for most domestic chores, while men did most of the outside tasks. When it was necessary, however, everyone was expected to help with heavy agricultural jobs, such as clearing rocks to create farm fields.

Very young children did not normally have household roles, but by age five they were expected to take on simple tasks. Girls learned to spin, knit, sew, cook, work in the garden, milk the cows, and care for the younger children. Although every farm was unique, in general young boys helped with feeding livestock and gathering firewood. Older boys would clear fields, build fences, and harvest crops. From about 14 years of age, boys were expected to work a full day in the fields. Girls of that age were expected to be able to do any domestic job in the home. If you could choose, which work would you rather have done: a boy’s or a girl’s? Why?

Imagine yourself living the way people did in the mid-1800s. Their winter heat came from a wood stove, which meant cutting and hauling wood. Even in summer, the wood stove was used every day for heating water and cooking. People went to bed early because light came from candles and oil lamps. This light was too dim for much activity, and wax and oil were expensive. There was no indoor plumbing. People used basins to hold hand-pumped water. There were no flush toilets yet; they used outhouses or chamber pots.
During the 1850s, many children were needed at home to work on farms or in workshops. In Canada West during the 1840s, Egerton Ryerson set up a system of free elementary schools, but many children attended school rarely or not at all. Some religious organizations provided education for children, but these often charged fees, which many families could not afford. It was not until the late 1800s that public schooling became available to everyone.

There was little entertainment. Newspapers were popular. People wrote long letters to each other describing their daily lives. Visiting friends and family was a favourite pastime. Going to religious services on Sunday was an event to be looked forward to; it was a relief from the hard work of everyday life and a time for socializing.

Frances Tweedie Milne and her husband farmed in Scarborough, now part of Toronto. What do you think her life was like? Base your answers on the following diary extracts.

May 24, 1869: William and I stuffed mattress. We sewed it all and did it very nicely. We both tied the twine. Didn’t finish today.

August 2, 1869: Busy canning cherries. Jennie helping to stone them. Boiling 1/2 my vinegar.

November 11, 1869: Busy preparing for the [barn] raising tomorrow, beheaded two geese for it.

December 28, 1869: Killed seven hogs and got them salted before dark. Margaret and I got on very well alone and quite delighted that this job is over.

January to April, 1870: Busy at my rug and knitting sock in the evening... Finished rug... Started 2nd sock for Em... Cut my lilac print... Busy at my lilac print dress... Cut Wm.’s shirts.

August 21, 1872: Baby a week old today. It feels most fearfully lonesome and I can’t get relief without a cry.

September 13, 1872: Am alone and baby cried some. I am feeling very sad sometimes.

WEB LINK
For more information on life in the mid-1800s, visit our Web site.
Social Characteristics

British North American society was not the same everywhere. Canada East was mainly French-speaking and Roman Catholic. Canada West was mainly English-speaking and Protestant. There were communities of people of African descent, especially in Nova Scotia and in the south part of Canada West. First Nations people lived apart from European settlers.

Two things were common to all of the colonies. First, there were distinct class divisions. People spoke, dressed, and acted differently depending on which class of society they belonged to. Second, there was much movement of people into and out of settled areas. This was because people were constantly trying to improve their situation in life.

THINKING It Over

1. From what you have read, create a “day in the life of” timeline, outlining what your day might have been like in the 1850s.

2. Do research to compare the general conditions described in this section with the general conditions in Canada today. With a partner, compare them under the following headings: a) population, b) gender roles, and c) technological development. Discuss with your partner whether you think things are better or worse now than they were then, giving your reasons.
Why do we study history? Some might say we study history to see how things have changed. That is true; however, historians are also interested in studying continuity: how and why some things stay the same. For example, your textbook says that “in the 1850s, roles were usually organized by gender.” Some of those gender roles have changed over time. Women today work outside the home much more than they did in 1850, and men do more work inside it. Some things have not changed, however. It is still true, for example, that women today still do more domestic work than men, and on average men get paid more than women for many kinds of work. Historians try to understand both how and why some things change while other things stay the same.

Let us look at an example from your everyday life. On a plain piece of paper, draw a map or floor plan of your school. Show as much detail as you can, and use a legend if it helps you show more.

Now take a look at the floor plan and short description of Melissa Johnson’s school in Stanley, New Brunswick, around 1870.

As time was spent for the greater part at school I will try to tell you what the school house was like, and also tell you of the master, the only teacher I ever had. I will draw a map—a picture of the school house and a floor plan.
Find similarities and differences

Working in groups, fill out a chart like this one, showing differences and similarities between Melissa Johnson's school and yours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differences</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One room</td>
<td>Students used desks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyze the similarities and differences

Write a paragraph describing how you think life would be different for students in this school than in yours, and another paragraph describing ways you think life would be the same.

Step 2

When we needed to write or cipher we turned in to the desk, and when just studying we turned out. The small children who were not yet using pencil or pen sat on the benches, where there were no desks.

APPLY It

Historians also study whether changes represent progress or decline. They ask the question, Have things gotten better or worse? Usually the answer is not simply either “better” or “worse,” but a combination of both. Think about school and the lives of children since the mid-1800s. Using the section on Everyday Life from page H 10 of your textbook and the information you collected above, fill out a chart like this one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways in which life is better for children today</th>
<th>Ways in which life was better for children in the mid-1800s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The settled areas in the colonies were separated by vast distances, bodies of water, and difficult terrain. Those who wished to unite the colonies would have to overcome obstacles imposed by the challenging landscape. William Lyon Mackenzie King, prime minister from 1921–1930 and 1935–1948, once remarked, “Canada has too much geography.” What do you think he meant by this?

**Vast Distances and Difficult Terrain**

First Nations people moved and transported goods in all parts of Canada. They originally showed Europeans the routes from place to place, from one watershed to another, enabling Europeans to travel long distances before there were roads, railways, canals, and powerboats. If you drive from Halifax to Vancouver, your route covers 5876 km. Today, airplanes can connect these cities in a matter of hours. In the 1850s, it took months to make this journey. To make matters more difficult, some colonies were separated by geographical barriers, such as mountains and bodies of water. Developing a transportation system would be essential in order to create a united nation.
Climate Extremes

Canadians sometimes call their country the “Great White North.” This implies that Canada is frozen solid most of the year. In reality, the climate varies enormously from region to region. This table summarizes some of the differences.

Climate affects how societies develop. In areas where winters are milder, outdoor work is possible for a longer part of the year. The length of the seasons and the amount of precipitation influences the agriculture, and thus the economy, of a region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Airstreams</th>
<th>Summers</th>
<th>Winters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Coast</td>
<td>Warm and moist</td>
<td>Warm and moist</td>
<td>Temperate and wet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prairies</td>
<td>Cold winter/ hot summer</td>
<td>Hot and dry</td>
<td>Cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Lakes– St. Lawrence</td>
<td>Cold winter/ hot summer</td>
<td>Hot and humid</td>
<td>Snowy and wind-chilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>Arctic and maritime</td>
<td>Warm and humid</td>
<td>Snowy and cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>Arctic</td>
<td>Cool and short</td>
<td>Long and cold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These images show contrasting climates in Ontario (left) and Iqaluit (right). In what ways does climate affect our lives?

THINKING It Over

1. Quote some figures and details about the physical features from this section to illustrate the great size and diverse geography of British North America.

2. In your own words, discuss with a partner why Mackenzie King might have said that Canada has “too much geography.” Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

3. Assess what it would have been like to live in each region during the 1850s. Consider transportation, climate, and ways of life.
The British North American colonies had similar government structures. This may have made it easier for them to work together on matters of common interest.

The Government of the Canadas
In your previous studies, you examined the political structure of the Canadas. The diagram on this page may help remind you of what the government system there looked like. The Crown appointed the governor who, in turn, appointed the members of the legislative council and executive council. The executive council is the part of government that decides what bills will be introduced into the legislature. It is now called the cabinet. For a bill to become law, it had to be approved by the legislative assembly, the legislative council, and the governor.

The voters consisted of male property owners. They chose the members of the legislative assembly. Even though the legislative assembly was elected by the people, the Crown still held influence because it appointed the governor. The Crown generally chose a member of the British nobility to be governor. The governor tended to choose conservative people to be members of the legislative council. There was a mixture of influences in government: the Crown, the nobility, and men who owned property.
Canada East and Canada West each had the same number of seats in the legislative assembly. This sometimes caused political deadlock, as the two sides fought with each other about the best way to solve the economic challenges of the colony.

Two issues tended to deadlock the legislative assembly: transportation and representation. Politicians from Canada West wanted to expand transportation facilities to increase trade and wealth; they were willing to spend government money to do so. Politicians from Canada East did not want to change their existing way of life; they felt that better links with Canada West would threaten their identity, and they resisted attempts to spend tax money on transportation improvements.

There was also deadlock over the representation issue. You may recall from Grade 7 that Canada West supported representation by population, while Canada East wanted to retain equal representation. Compromise seemed impossible.

**WORDS THAT MATTER**

**political deadlock** a situation where progress cannot be made because the parties involved do not agree
Government in the Maritimes

Before 1784, there were only two colonies in the Maritime region—Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. However, in that year, Nova Scotia was divided in three, and the separate colonies of New Brunswick and Cape Breton Island were created. Transportation was slow and difficult. Today, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick are Canada’s smallest provinces.

By the late 1850s, many people in the region were talking about joining New Brunswick and Nova Scotia into a single colony again. Supporters of union said that a single government controlling this larger population would have greater influence in North America. The British government liked this idea because it would be less expensive to have one colonial government rather than two. In fact, it went a step further: Why not bring Prince Edward Island into the united colony? the government asked. Now the population would be more than 663,000, and two governments would be done away with, saving even more money.

Why do you think it would have been relatively easy to create a single colony in the Maritimes? All three of these colonies had the same form of government. It was exactly the same form as in the Canadas. By 1864, the Maritime colonies had scheduled a conference in Charlottetown, P.E.I., to discuss Maritime union. You will return to this story in Chapter 3.
What Was Prince Edward Island’s Absentee Landlord Problem?

In 1763, the British took over the French colonies in what later became Canada. At that time, they gave most of the land on Prince Edward Island to wealthy families who lived in Britain. Local farmers were mainly tenants. They rented the land from these absentee landowners, called landlords. In the other colonies, farm families could buy land relatively cheaply. In P.E.I., this was impossible. Island farmers formed a tenant union to push for change. They passed the following resolutions:

Resolved. That we the [tenant farmers] will... withhold... rent... to resist [being thrown off the land], seize [arrest] and sale [of our property] to pay rent.

Resolved. That it is our duty to unite as tenants for mutual protection and sympathy in order to put an end to the leasehold system [having to rent land instead of being able to buy it].

Resolved. That every member provide himself with a bugle to summon the note alarm on the approaches of the rent-leeches [rent collectors].

What do you suppose the tenants would do when they heard a bugle warning that a rent collector was coming?

The absentee landlords issue was one of the reasons P.E.I. saw itself as different from the rest of British North America. In 1866, the Charlottetown Examiner wrote that P.E.I.’s legislature refused to join Confederation because of its “isolated, peculiar and exceptional position... as contrasted with the other British North American Provinces and Colonies.”

THINKING It Over

1. Imagine you are a tenant farmer. Using information from the resolutions, explain in your own words what you want and what you are prepared to do to get it.

2. With one or two partners, discuss why the farmers of P.E.I. would want to own their land, rather than rent it from absentee landlords.
The Distant Colonies

There were other colonies in British North America, but they were too far away to have close relations with the Canadas and the three Maritime colonies. In the East was Newfoundland. The sea crossing to Newfoundland across the Cabot Strait was dangerous and unpredictable. Newfoundland tended to go its own way, although it watched the Maritime union movement with interest.

In the West, there were two colonies: British Columbia (formerly New Caledonia before it became a colony in 1858) and Vancouver’s Island (the original name of modern Vancouver Island). They were united into the single colony of British Columbia in 1866. All of these colonies had the traditional British government system. In B.C., there was strong American influence.

Many Americans came north into B.C. to join the gold rush movement of the 1850s. Some British Columbians felt that the rest of British North America was too distant. If the colony wanted to change its status, they argued, it should become part of the United States. Get rid of the Crown, these people said. They thought an American republic was better than a British monarchy.

Treacherous ocean waters made transportation from Newfoundland dangerous, increasing the sense of isolation from the other colonies.

What does the signpost in this political cartoon represent?

WORDS MATTER

republic a system of government that has no monarchy; all the politicians are elected
Sir James Douglas (1803–1877) was a senior official for the Hudson’s Bay Company. He had a reputation for working hard and getting jobs done; however, he was also difficult to deal with.

In 1849, Douglas was appointed the Hudson’s Bay Company agent on Vancouver’s Island to supervise the fur trade. He had disputes with the governor, Richard Blanshard. In theory, Blanshard could overrule Douglas, but in practice Douglas had the real power. In less than a year, Blanshard resigned.

When the colony of British Columbia was created in 1858, Douglas became its first governor. He supervised the building of a 640-km road to the Cariboo region when gold was discovered there. In 1862, he got into trouble with Britain for taking out loans for the construction without permission.

His opponents began to complain that he was snobbish and a dictator. The British decided to end his governorship of the colony.

The story of Sir James Douglas brings up an important question: should people be judged by their achievements, or should their personalities be considered as well? Douglas achieved much professionally; however, his personality was grating. In what ways was Sir James Douglas a hero or a villain? Are you unsure? Why?
Economic Features of British North America

The economy of British North America was becoming **industrialized**. Factories with steam-powered equipment were replacing small, hand-powered workshops. Goods such as stoves, coats, or wagon wheels could be produced more quickly than they had been in old-style workshops.

**Effects of Industrialization**

Industries did not appear everywhere across British North America at the same time. Factors such as geography, transportation, and population affected the growth of industries.

**Canada East**

One of the first places industry flourished was in Montréal in the late 1840s. The St. Lawrence River gave the city a good supply of water. Boilers were built to convert water into steam, which in turn ran pumps, lathes, drills, and other equipment. Factory owners hired workers from the city’s poor to do the dreary and often dangerous work. These people were not well educated and were poorly paid. Many of them were recent immigrants to British North America, escaping even worse conditions in their homelands.

Much of the work in these factories was performed by women and children. Employers paid them less than they paid men. There were few laws to restrict child labour, and children as young as six years old sometimes worked in factories. Employers sometimes beat them if they made mistakes or fell asleep from exhaustion. This became a much larger issue in the 1890s as **capitalists** built many new factories in the expanding cities of the time. You will read more about this in Chapter 7.
By the late 1850s, there were steam-powered factories in the suburbs of Montréal such as Hochelaga, Saint-Henri, Valleyfield, Saint-Hyacinthe, and Saint-Jean. As well, there were a few factories in the Eastern Townships and the Québec City region.

Montréal soon established itself as the most industrialized city in British North America. It held this position for about 100 years. Three industries dominated the city by the early 1860s. These are summarized in the organizer below.

Montréal was in its prime in 1872 as British North America’s most industrialized city.

**Leading Industries in Montréal, 1860s**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Footwear</th>
<th>Textiles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>flour mills, sugar refineries, breweries, bakeries, butter and cheese factories</td>
<td>boot and shoe factories making footwear for all occasions</td>
<td>fabric factories making cotton bed blankets and sheets, clothing, curtains, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details</td>
<td>This was the largest industry at this time. Small and large operations existed in this industry, and there were many factories around the city.</td>
<td>This was the second-largest industry. Soon Canada East’s footwear factories dominated all of eastern British North America.</td>
<td>The workforce comprised mainly women, assisted by children. Some of the work was still done in people’s homes, so there tended to be a large number of small companies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: British North America in the Mid-1800s

As Canada became industrialized, more and more people moved from rural to urban areas. In the large cities, factories sprang up. Working conditions were poor. Families had difficulty surviving on meagre wages.

In poor areas of the city, one in three children died before reaching the age of five.

Prince Albert’s story...

In 1860, large crowds welcomed Queen Victoria’s son, Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales, when he visited British North America. The city of Montreal held a dinner for him with 3000 guests. The table was filled with offerings of oysters, lobster, beef, salmon, and duck.

The poor were forced to live in terrible conditions. Flea-ridden rats and mice spread typhus. Many children and their parents died from this disease.

In a time when the government provided little support for the poor, Montreal’s religious order, the Sisters of Charity (the “Grey Nuns”), helped the sick and the disadvantaged. In 1857, the Grey Nuns took in 662 abandoned and orphaned children. Of these children, only 29 survived the year. The Grey Nuns continue their good work to this day.
Canada West
Industrialization began to flourish in Canada West in the 1870s. At mid-century, the largest industry there was textiles. Factories spun cotton into cloth for making items such as clothing, curtains, and tablecloths. The metalwork industry was growing quickly. Factories made stoves, pots and pans, beds, and other household goods.

Although Canada West got off to a slower start than Canada East, it soon caught up. By the 1880s, there were large industrial operations in what was by then called Ontario. In Chapter 7, you will learn how Ontario became the industrial centre of Canada’s economy.

The Maritimes
Shipbuilding was an important craft in the Maritime colonies because fishing and overseas trade were so significant. Many of the workers were skilled carpenters, sailmakers, or wood turners. Shipyards eventually adapted to steam-powered cutting, shaping, and drilling methods. By the 1850s, the region’s yards turned out an average of 374 ships a year.

Farming and logging were important in rural areas of the Maritime colonies where populations were low. Factories required large numbers of workers, so they were built in or near urban areas. The population was spread out in this region. As a result, by the 1860s, industrialization had only just begun in the Maritimes. Ever since, industrial production has been lower in this region than in Québec and Ontario.
The West

The West was thinly populated and there was little industrialization there until the late 1800s. In the Prairies, the First Nations and Hudson’s Bay Company employees ran the fur trade. Trapping, slaughtering, and skinning animals did not require industrial methods. The Hudson’s Bay Company, which owned most of the Canadian Prairies, had banned settlers from moving into the region. The Hudson’s Bay Company did not want agriculture or industry to disrupt the fur trade.

Like the Maritimes, the colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver’s Island did not need factories; forestry and shipping were the leading economic activities. There was little industry in this region until the 1880s.

Environmental Milestones

The Rise in Global Temperatures

Scientists note that the gradual rise in world temperatures began around 1860. The growth of cities and factories led to the burning of fossil fuels—coal, oil, and gas—in ever-greater amounts. Fossil fuel consumption allows people to produce more and have higher living standards, but there is a cost to the environment. The global climate change experienced today has its origins in the mid-1800s.
Many “Little Countries”

In some ways, British North America was like the countries of Europe today. In Europe, more than twenty-five countries have formed an economic union to increase trade among themselves. They recognize that many of them are too small to develop large economies on their own, but together they can form one large trading bloc of almost 500 million people.

The British North American colonies had small populations and were distant from each other. If they formed their own economic union, they could increase trade among themselves. Goods could be traded between Sarnia and Halifax with ease because of the new railway. Talk of uniting the BNA colonies began in the 1860s. The colonies’ economies were very different. How could such a union be successful, the politicians’ critics asked?
British North America was a collection of colonies spanning a vast geography. The colonies were very different from one another. Some, like Canada East and Canada West, had large populations, while others had small populations. Their economies were different. The Canadas were becoming industrialized, but the West and the Maritimes were not. The colonies also had similarities. They had similar political systems and faced similar political challenges. Could these colonies be united into a single nation?

### Chapter 1: British North America in the Mid-1800s

**PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER**

British North America was a collection of colonies spanning a vast geography. The colonies were very different from one another. Some, like Canada East and Canada West, had large populations, while others had small populations. Their economies were different. The Canadas were becoming industrialized, but the West and the Maritimes were not. The colonies also had similarities. They had similar political systems and faced similar political challenges. Could these colonies be united into a single nation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colony</th>
<th>Physical Features</th>
<th>Political Features</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Economic Features</th>
<th>My Thoughts</th>
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**After READING**

**Taking Notes to Compare and Contrast**

Look carefully at the notes you have written in your graphic organizer. Which of the factors (physical features, political features, people, and economic features) do you think would have the most impact on whether or not the colonies could unite into a single nation? Discuss your opinion with a partner or small group.

**THINKING It Through**

1. **a)** Review the notes you made during reading. Use these to help create three Venn diagrams to illustrate the similarities and differences between the Canadas and the other British North American colonies at the time. Create one diagram for each of the following topics: (i) the people, (ii) the political structure, and (iii) the economies.

   b) Pick one of your Venn diagrams and use it to write a paragraph about those similarities and differences.

   c) Draw a picture, or describe a scene in words, to illustrate what you consider to be the most important similarity or difference in the topic you selected. In two sentences, explain what the picture or scene shows and why you chose it.