

Part A: Pre-reading Discussion option 1

Issue: Learning about Religions in School

- 1. When you were in high school, did you learn about religions around the world? Explain.**

- 2. Agree or Disagree:
Parents should be able to take their children OUT of a high school course if different world religions are taught in that course.**

- 3. In Canada, there are public and private schools. Some private schools are organized by a religious/faith group. Do you think a Catholic School, for example, should teach about all religions and not just Catholicism? Explain.**

Part A: Pre-reading Discussion option 2

Issue: Learning about Religions in School

- 1. When did you first learn about the idea of “religion”? Explain**
- 2. Did your parents follow or practice a religion?
If YES, how did it impact your life? Explain.
If NO, would you do the same with your children?**
- 3. When you were in high school, did you learn about religions from around the world? Explain.**
- 4. In your home country, do religious schools exist? - public (gov’t pays)? OR private (parents pay)?**
- 5. In Canada, there are public and private schools. Some private schools are organized by a religious/faith group. Do you think a Catholic School, for example, should teach about all religions and not just Catholicism? Explain.**

Part B: Pre-reading Vocabulary task

1. Important Vocabulary

Be sure to look up the words you are not familiar with and complete this chart.

Word	Word Form	Meaning
an appeal		
to appeal		
a case		
to dismiss		
be exempt from		
an exemption		
to infringe		
to judge		
a judgment		
incompatible with		
probabilities		
a violation		

2. Who's involved in this story?

Canadian Civil Liberties Association

Commission scolaire des Chenes

Eight interveners

Panel of judges

Parents

Quebec Court of Appeal

Quebec Education Department

Quebec Superior Court

Supreme Court of Canada

The School Board

After you read the news story, create a visual to show the divisions (Who is against who?) and the levels of power within the divisions.

Part C News story

[All AWL sublist words are **highlighted** in this story]

Supreme Court stands by Quebec schools' religion course

By Thandi Fletcher and Natalie Stechyson, *Postmedia News* February 17, 2012

Guess what? Because of history, Catholic schools in the province of Quebec are considered “public,” which means the government funds them.

1) Catholic parents in Quebec cannot keep their kids out of a school course that teaches them about other religions, the country's top court has ruled.

2) The Supreme Court of Canada on Friday rendered its decision in a **controversial** case that was cast by some observers as a matter of religious freedom versus a bid by the province to increase tolerance.

3) Allowing children to opt out of the course would be "a **rejection** of the multicultural reality of Canadian society and **ignores** the Quebec government's obligations with regard to public education," the court ruled.

4) The case pit a set of Catholic parents against the school board and the Ministry of Education in the province of Quebec.

5) Quebec's 'Ethics and Religious **Culture** program' became mandatory for schools in May 2008.

6) In the course, students learn about the Catholic and Protestant Christian **traditions** in Quebec **culture**. The program is meant to **expose** students— who are also taught about the **contributions** of Judaism, aboriginal spirituality and other religious **traditions**— to a variety of religions.

7) The **couple** from Drummondville, Que., at the centre of the case, who can't be **identified**, wrote to their children's schools asking that they be exempt from the course.

8) They said they didn't want their children taking the course because of "the disruption caused by forced, premature **contact** with a **series** of beliefs that were mostly **incompatible** with those of the family, as well as the adverse effect on the religious faith of the members of this family," court **documents** said.

9) The parents **maintained** that the program interfered with their ability to pass on the Catholic religion to their children, and that **exposing** their children to various religions was confusing for them.

10) The **couple** went to court after the *Commission scolaire des Chenes* refused to exempt their two children.

11) Quebec's Education Department had publicly announced there would no exemptions.

12) In 2009, a Quebec Superior Court judge **rejected** the parents' request for an exemption for their children, ruling their right to freedom of religion was not being **violated**.

13) Last year, the Quebec Court of Appeal **rejected** their bid to appeal the decision. There were eight interveners in the case, including the Canadian **Civil Liberties Association**.

14) On Friday, the Supreme Court dismissed the appeal.

15) The court's **panel** of judges was unanimous in its **final** decision, finding that the parents did not **sufficiently** prove that the program infringed on their right to freedom of religion.

16) "It is not enough for a person to say that his or her rights have been infringed," a **summary** of the judgment stated. "The person must prove the infringement on a balance of probabilities."

17) In an explanation of the ruling, Justice Marie Deschamps explained "the early **exposure** of children to realities that differ from those in their immediate family **environment** is a fact of life in society."

18) "Parents are free to pass their personal beliefs on to their children if they so wish," she wrote.

19) "The suggestion that **exposing** children to a variety of religious facts in itself infringes their religious freedom or that of their parents amounts to a **rejection** of the multicultural reality of Canadian society and **ignores** the Quebec government's obligations with regard to public education."

20) Due to the **neutral** nature of the program, Justice Louis LeBel wrote that simply **exposing** children to religions is not enough to be considered a **violation** of freedom of religion.

21) "The very nature of a public education system **implies** the **creation** of opportunities for students of different origins and religions to learn about the **diversity** of opinions and **cultures** existing in our society, even in religious matters," wrote LeBel. "Imparting information about different views of the world cannot be **equated** with a **violation** of freedom of religion."

What is the main issue in this news story? Use your own words to explain.

Supreme Court stands by Quebec schools' religion course

By Thandi Fletcher and Natalie Stechyson, *Postmedia News* February 17, 2012

Part D: Comprehension Questions

1. What happened? Complete this sequence of events

- a) May **2008** **the Ethics and Religious Culture program started** in all Quebec high schools
- b) A Quebec family _____
- c) _____ refused to allow the children to skip that class
- d) The Quebec family _____
- e) _____ Quebec Superior Court _____
- f) _____ appealed the decision to the _____
- g) Quebec Court of Appeal _____
- h) The Quebec family _____ to the Supreme Court of Canada
- i) February 17, 2012 _____

Part E: Vocabulary in context

- Use context clues to guess the meanings of the words in bold. Note the words that helped you.
- Example: (para 1) the country's top court has **ruled** **- decided - (para 2) -decision**

(para 2) a **bid** by the province to increase tolerance _____

(para 3) allowing children to **opt out of** the course _____

(para 4) case **pit** a set of parents against the school board _____

(para 5) program became **mandatory** for schools _____

(para 6) the program is meant to **expose** children ... **to** _____

Part F: Inference What do you think these organizations would do?

(para 10) *Commission scolaire des Chenes* _____

(para 13) Canadian Civil Liberties Association _____

Part G: Determining Arguments For & Against the issue

- Complete this chart. In the first part, also identify WHO holds the view.
- Use your own words as much as possible for paraphrasing practice.

ISSUE: Should Quebec parents be allowed to take their children out of the Ethics & Religious course?

Arguments FOR from article	Arguments AGAINST from article
	<p><i>Justice Marie Deschamps (Supreme Court of Canada) (para 17)</i></p> <p><i>In reality, children will often learn and see differences between their family and society</i></p>
Your /Group's Arguments FOR	Your/ Group's Arguments AGAINST

Part H: **Post task Discussion**

1/ Make a list of adjectives you could use to describe the Quebec family in this news story.

2/ Do you know of a family or group of people that might behave similarly in this situation? Explain.

3/ As a group, write 4 discussion questions about the roles of family & schools in regards to learning about religion.

- **Everyone in the group needs to have the questions on his/her own piece of paper.**
- **Later, each of you will use the questions to lead a discussion in another group.**