

Name: _____

Spotlight on: VIOLA DESMOND

Viola Desmond is a true Canadian hero. She was born and raised in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She originally trained to become a school teacher, but then decided to open a hairdressing salon and beauty parlour with her husband. She was a determined businesswoman who travelled across the province to grow and expand her business.

One day, at the age of 32, she drove up north to the city of New Glasgow. Unfortunately, her car broke down and while it was being repaired, she decided to go to the movies. She purchased a ticket, entered the movie theatre, and found a seat on the main floor. However, in the 1940s, African Canadians in this town were only allowed to sit in the balcony area, and the main floor was exclusively for White customers only. Thus, the theatre staff demanded that Viola move to the balcony area. This was the moment when Viola Desmond made history.

Viola refused to move. She explained that she was going to stay in her seat because there was a better view from the main floor. Angered, the theatre staff called the police immediately, and the police dragged Viola out, injuring her hip. She was charged and forced to stay in jail for the night.

Viola held her grace and dignity throughout this entire maltreatment. The next morning, Viola paid the fine of \$20, even though she did not do anything wrong. She was also charged with deceiving the Government of Nova Scotia for not paying the tax difference between a main floor and balcony seat ticket, which was one cent.

When Viola returned home to Halifax, she decided to fight the charges. It was evident that this was not simply about tax evasion, but about racism. Viola took this injustice to court, and she publicized her experience to raise awareness and conversation about Canadian discrimination and segregation. She fought for equal rights and freedoms.

Today, Viola Desmond is a symbol of bravery and justice. She stood up courageously for what is right and inspired others both locally and internationally. We honour her today by discussing her story and learning from past history. She is also the face of the new \$10 bill in Canada. She is the first African-Canadian woman featured on a Canadian paper bill.



PRE and POST DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Viola Desmond

PRE-discussion Questions

- What is it like going to a movie theatre? Walk me through the steps.
- Where do you sit? How much are tickets?
- Who has experienced difficulty in a movie theatre based on their skin colour?



POST-discussion Questions

- Imagine you were a bystander present at the time that Viola Desmond experienced the discrimination. Would you do anything if you saw the theatre staff demand that Viola move seats? Why or why not? What would you do?
- Why do you think that no one stood up for Viola Desmond in the theatre?
- As a bystander **today**, what would you do if you saw the theatre staff ask someone to move seats because of their skin colour?
- Is racism still a problem today? Are there any other racist injustices similar to that of Viola Desmond that you have seen or still see today?
- What do you think the government can do to promote more inclusion and equality?
- What do you think the community can do to promote more inclusion and equality?
- What can schools do to promote more inclusion and equality?
- What can you do to promote more inclusion and equality?

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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS- Viola Desmond

1. What nationality was Viola Desmond? (2 words)
2. In what province did Viola grow up?
3. What did Viola originally want to be as a profession?
4. What was Viola's business?
5. Why did Viola go to the city of New Glasgow?
6. Why did Viola go to the movie theatre?
7. Why did the theatre staff demand that Viola move seats?
8. Who dragged Viola out of the theatre?
9. What was Viola fighting against?
10. Which Canadian bill is Viola's face on?

COMPREHENSION ANSWERS

1. What nationality was Viola Desmond? (2 words)
AFRICAN-CANADIAN
2. In what province did Viola grow up?
NOVA SCOTIA
3. What did Viola originally want to be as a profession?
SCHOOL TEACHER
4. What was Viola's business?
HAIR AND BEAUTY SALON
5. Why did Viola go to the city of New Glasgow?
TO GROW AND EXPAND HER BUSINESS
6. Why did Viola go to the movie theatre?
SHE WAS WAITING WHILE HER CAR WAS BEING REPAIRED
7. Why did the theatre staff demand that Viola move seats?
SHE SAT IN THE MAIN FLOOR AREA FOR THE WHITE CUSTOMERS. AFRICAIN-CANADIANS COULD ONLY SIT IN THE BALCONY AREA AT THAT TIME.
8. Who dragged Viola out of the theatre?
THE POLICE
9. What was Viola fighting against?
DISCRIMINATION, RACISM, INEQUALITY, INJUSTICE, etc.
10. Which Canadian bill is Viola's face on?
\$10 BILL

Name: _____

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS- Viola Desmond

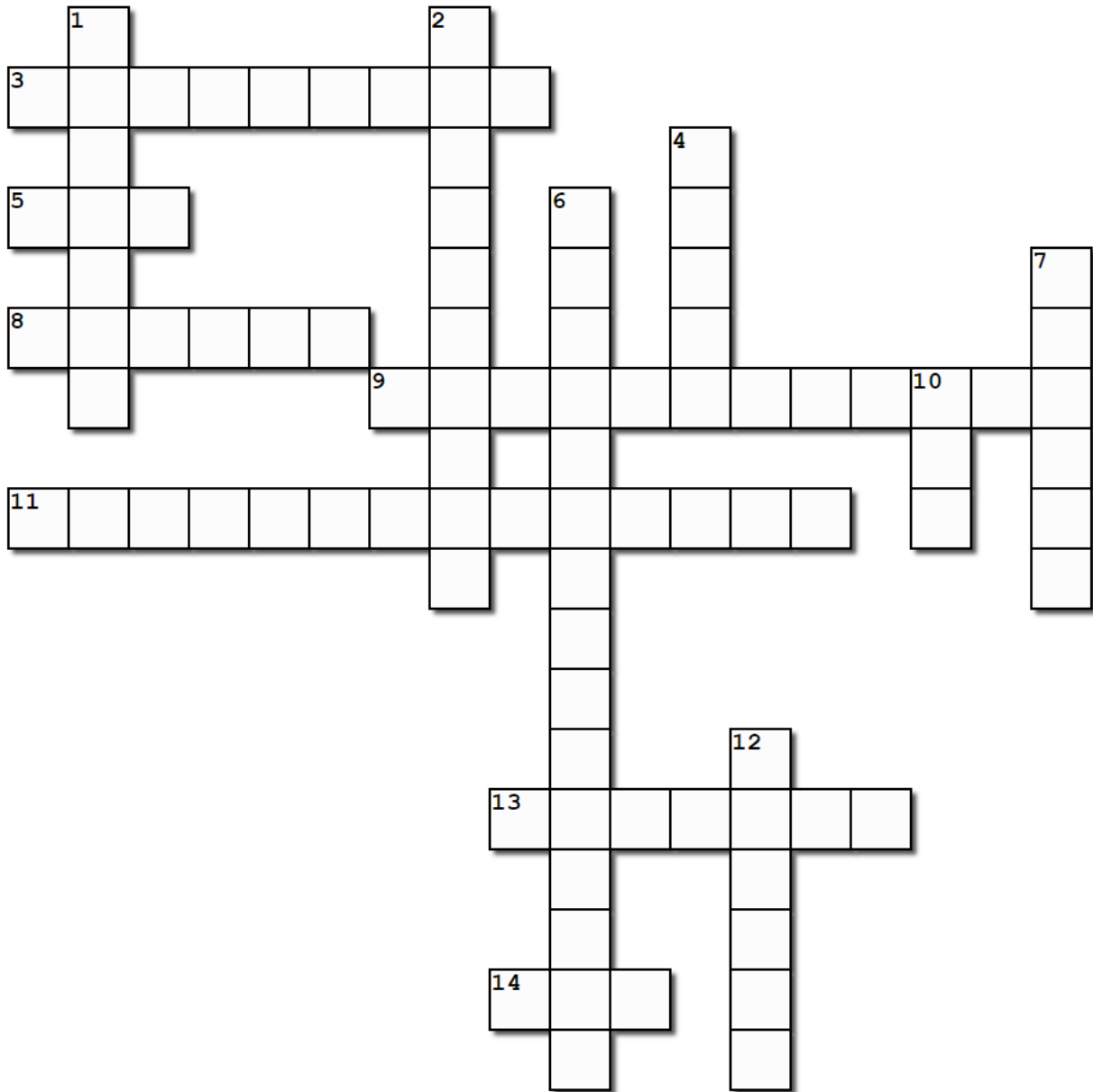
1. What nationality was Viola Desmond?
a) Canadian b) American c) African d) African-Canadian
2. In what province did Viola grow up?
a) Nova Scotia b) Ontario c) Québec d) New-Brunswick
3. What did Viola originally want to be as a profession?
a) teacher b) singer c) actor d) businesswoman
4. What was Viola's business?
a) movie theatre b) car dealership c) sports centre d) hair and beauty salon
5. Why did Viola go to the city of New Glasgow?
a) to watch a movie b) to expand her business c) to visit family d) to eat
6. Why did Viola go to the movie theatre?
a) to fight discrimination b) to spend time with friends
c) she was waiting for her car to be fixed d) to enjoy her vacation
7. Why did the theatre staff demand that Viola move seats?
a) the seat was already taken b) Viola was in the "White" section
c) the seat was dirty d) Viola could not see
8. Who dragged Viola out of the theatre?
a) her husband b) her friend c) herself d) the police
9. What was Viola fighting against?
a) racism b) dirtiness in the theatre c) bad service d) shorter movies
10. Which Canadian bill is Viola's face on?
a) \$5 b) \$10 c) \$20 d) \$100

COMPREHENSION ANSWERS- Viola Desmond

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CROSSWORD- Viola Desmond



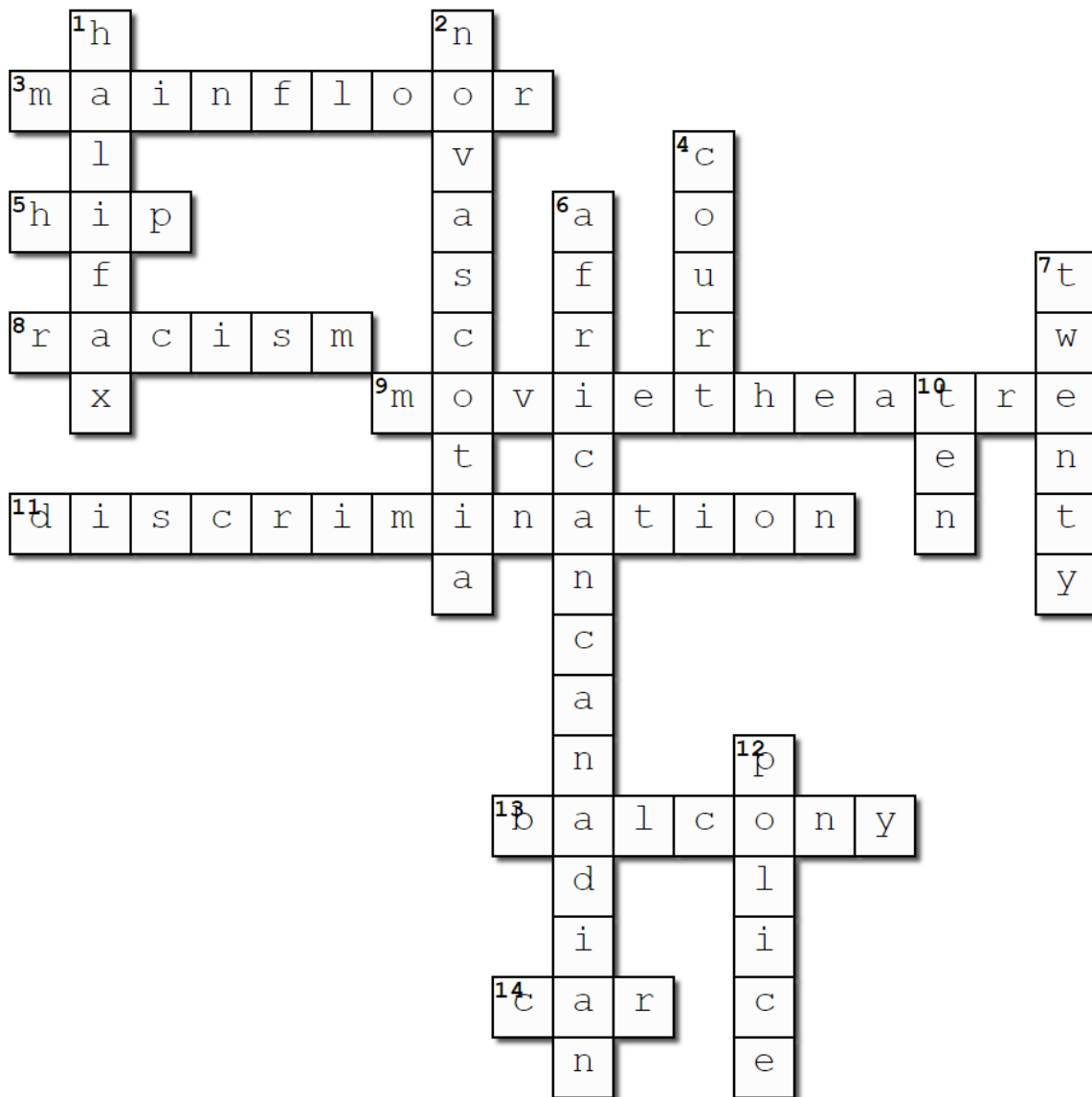
Horizontal

- 3. Where Viola sat
- 5. Body part that Viola injured
- 8. Word for unfair treatment due to race/colour
- 9. Place where Viola was arrested (2 words)
- 11. Word for unfair treatment due to differences
- 13. Where African-Canadians had to sit
- 14. This had to be repaired

Vertical

- 1. City where Viola was born
- 2. Province where Viola was born
- 4. Where Viola fought her case/injustice
- 6. Viola's nationality
- 7. Amount of money that Viola was fined
- 10. Dollar bill that Viola's face is on
- 12. They dragged Viola out of the theatre

CROSSWORD ANSWER: Viola Desmond



Horizontal

3. Where Viola sat (**mainfloor**)
5. Body part that Viola injured (**hip**)
8. Word for unfair treatment due to race/colour (**racism**)
9. Place where Viola was arrested (2 words) (**movietheatre**)
11. Word for unfair treatment due to differences (**discrimination**)
13. Where African-Canadians had to sit (**balcony**)
14. This had to be repaired (**car**)

Vertical

1. City where Viola was born (**halifax**)
2. Province where Viola was born (**novascotia**)
4. Where Viola fought her case/injustice (**court**)
6. Viola's nationality (**africancanadian**)
7. Amount of money that Viola was fined (**twenty**)
10. Dollar bill that Viola's face is on (**ten**)
12. They dragged Viola out of the theatre (**police**)

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WORD SEARCH- Viola Desmond

D F G A G C H E I O E D S O N N Q H
S M Q K I D I N P Q I J M V A A A H
N O I K O N H J J G W L A X M C R R
N O I T A N I M I R C S I D O I Y Y
L B V G X D C M P A R E N F W R M H
R L C A F A S O N B R O F A S F G D
I B I C S I F A U T N J L L S A M F
K L N B C C D I A R H P O U E Y P A
N Y L A R I O E L C T M O Q N N M I
H C R F A A H T U A H L R J I F R N
Q A O N B T L U I R H O H Z S V G Y
G R B U E A S L H A I V Y L U K K H
P O L I C E L M O G A D K U B L W I
V D V Q V I O L A D E S M O N D T Y
B O B V M D C I M Y N O C L A B X N
M D E S X S I V A H I E B Z O B L H
P J I L A P O L H I B A T K P Q N V
D V Q O Z J V O I P S K M F S D K J

AFRICAN
CANADIAN
DISCRIMINATION
MOVIETHEATRE
RACISM

BALCONY
CAR
HALIFAX
NOVASCOTIA
TENDOLLARBILL

BUSINESSWOMAN
COURT
MAINFLOOR
POLICE
VIOLADESMOND