



## Lesson 1

The resource is being field-tested and is subject to revision.

### Introducing “Canadian Pulp”

#### Synopsis

Students will be introduced to the pulp genre and Canadian pulp magazines of the 1940s through examination of pulp titles, defining the boundaries of “pulp writing”, examining pulp cover art and story illustrations, and analyzing the openings of several stories. French language pulp publications out of Quebec of the same period tended to focus on different subject matter, but are central to the Canadian pulp phenomenon.

#### Learning Outcomes

- Students will determine literary and cultural features of Canadian pulp magazine writing of the 1940s;
- Students will conduct an initial exploration of the **Tales From the Vault** website.
- Students will draw conclusions about Canadian pulp magazines of the 1940s by examining cover and illustration art associated with the LAC collection;
- Students will engage in textual analysis of the openings of several pulp stories and draw tentative conclusions about the nature of pulp magazine writing;
- Students will be introduced to a model for the reading and analysis of pulp fiction writing.

#### Preparation

1. See *Tales From the Vault* Website <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/index-e.html>
2. Produce overheads of the selected story openings (see Appendix A).
3. Prepare overheads of the covers of the LAC issues of the following: *Sensational Confessions*, *Yarns*, *Uncanny Tales*, *Stag*, *Les Drames de l’amour*, *Histoires de Cow-Boys* and of other covers on the website ‘gallery’ link. If students have access to the Website on classroom computers, or if you have the capacity to project the Website onto a large screen, overheads may not be necessary.
4. Purchase and prepare an overhead of a cover of a current issue of a contemporary pulp/crime magazine of the type available at drug stores or supermarkets.

#### Time

100 to 120 minutes

#### Process

##### Introduction (20 minutes)

Write these magazine titles on the board – or on an overhead – and ask students to anticipate what the contents might be:

*Sensational Crime Confessions*  
*Yarns*

*Uncanny Tales*  
*Stag*  
*Histoires de cow-boys*  
*Les Drames de l'amour*

- A. Brainstorm and record responses.
- B. Ask students if they have seen movies such as Tarantino's "True Romance" and "Pulp Fiction", or films like "The Maltese Falcon", "Sin City", "Raiders of the Lost Ark", "Le Neg' (Robert Morin), "L'Initiation" (Denis Heroux) ou "Taxi" (Luc Besson)
- C. Ask students if these film stories would fit into magazines with the above titles. What would the movies and the magazines have in common?
- D. Focus on the term 'pulp fiction' itself, asking students if they know where it came from, or if they know the definitions given at the beginning of Tarantino's movie "Pulp Fiction": "1. A soft, moist, shapeless mass of matter; 2. A magazine or book containing lurid subject matter and being characteristically printed on rough, unfinished paper."
- E. Ascertain if there are any fans of contemporary romance or crime magazine fiction. Bring out a copy of a current issue of such a publication and go through story titles and magazine contents with students.
- F. Brainstorm what the subject matter of 'pulp fiction' encompasses and record on board or overhead.
- G. Introduce the notion that there was a thriving Canadian pulp magazine industry in the 1940s in both of Canada's official languages and give some background (see *Tales From the Vault* Website [www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/index-e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/index-e.html) links "About Tales From the Vault" and "Introduction"). Ask students to record key points as the material is presented orally or visually and then have students reiterate points to summarize. You may wish to comment on both the English and French tradition of Canadian pulp publishing.

### **Body of Lesson (80 minutes)**

1. Now that the students have some preliminary ideas about the genre of pulp fiction, present the pulp magazine covers in the "gallery" link. Focus student discussion on what the illustrations communicate about the stories themselves, and what they do to attract readers. What would these illustrations lead readers to expect? Include the covers of the six archived complete magazine issues.  
**Note:** even more pulp magazine illustrative material for class study can be found at [pulpgallery.com](http://pulpgallery.com) and at [artsmcgill.com](http://artsmcgill.com).
2. For an initial look at a 1940s Canadian pulp fiction story, put on the overhead of the opening few paragraphs of "Passion Drove Me to Kill" (*Sensational Crime Confessions* January 1946, p.10, paragraphs 1-16) or have the students read directly from the Website. For a french example, you can use "Les aventures amoureuses d'un 'lumberjack", (p.11 *Les Drames de l'amour*), from paragraph 11 to the end of page 12.
  - a. Have students read the passage, noting any interesting features of narration, setting, and/or character.
  - b. Chicago setting – "gangland" atmosphere
  - c. 1<sup>st</sup> person "confessional" mode;
  - d. Dance hall – clues as to character of girl
  - e. Theme: "Love is a funny thing"
  - f. Diction: expression of passion – "I was burning up"
  - g. "My passion was overpowering me" – make predictions as to plot direction; what would be the conventional expectations of pulp fiction?
  - h. What conventional romance, "true confession" formulae might this story take?

Summarize discussion.

**Note:** This guided reading activity serves as a model of the kind of analysis that students will engage in as they work with the Website's primary source material. Point out features of diction and establishment of 'point of view'. Point out any textual contrasts the writer establishes early in the story, and make appropriate plot and character predictions. In subsequent lessons, students will be encouraged to use strategies such as 'two column notes' in their *analysis (I Read It, But I Don't Get It: Comprehension Strategies for Adolescent Readers*. Cris Tovani, Stenhouse Publishers, 2000)

3. As a follow-up, divide students into pairs or small groups and give each pair or group an overhead of the first few paragraphs of the following stories. Overheads will not be needed if students have direct website access. Ask them to read **only** the first several paragraphs, not the entire story (as indicated in Appendix A).

"I Was the Moll of a Hot Car Mob" (*Sensational Crime Confessions*, January 1946, p. 32)

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/027019-1906.32-e.html>

"Defeat of a Champion" (*Yarns*, July 1941, p. 4)

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/027019-1905.05-e.html>

"Dead Men Do Talk" (*Yarns*, July 1941, p. 23)

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/027019-1905.23-e.html>

"The Blank Paper Clue" (*Yarns*, July 1941, p. 31)

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/027019-1905.31-e.html>

"Badlands Purge" (*Yarns*, July 1941, p. 38)

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/027019-1905.38-e.html>

"The Rescue" (*Yarns*, July 1941, p. 61)

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/027019-1905.61-e.html>

"The Talking Heads" (*Uncanny Tales*, November 1940, p. 33)

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/027019-1904.34-e.html>

"Murder in the Graveyard" (*Uncanny Tales*, November 1940, p. 1)

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/027019-1904.02-e.html>

"Sharks" (*Uncanny Tales*, November 1940, p. 16)

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/027019-1904.17-e.html>

"Les aventures amoureuses d'un 'lumberJack'" (*Les Drames de l'amour*, p. 3.)

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/027019-1901.02-e.html>

"Combats sanglants" (*Histoires de cow-boys*, p. 3)

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/027019-1902.04-e.html>

The following french titles, found in *Histoires de cow-boys*, can be used for further analysis:

"Santa-Claus et ses pareils", p.24

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/027019-1902.25-e.html>

"Le cow-boy au coeur tendre", p.28

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/027019-1902.29-e.html>

"Le Perroquet des prairies", p. 31

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pulp/027019-1902.32-e.html>

Ask students to do a similar story opening analysis. Groups can formulate their own key questions; ie. Who is telling the story? Where is the story set? How is the setting significant? What are the plot set-ups the author uses? Are there any devices meant to arouse readers' interest? Where might you expect this story to go and what devices could the author use to intensify readers' interests? Students should be encouraged to mark up the overhead and then use it in a three minute presentation to the class where group members point out story features they have examined along with their predictions about where the story might go.

## **Additional Web Resources for Teacher and Students**

As part of your introduction to the pulp fiction genre and as background to this and subsequent lessons in this unit, look at the following Websites. If you can project Websites in your classroom, you might wish to present specific parts of these sites in class, and/or commend them to students as they work with the primary source unit materials.

ThePulp.Net – the ‘online world of pulp magazines’

<http://thepulp.net/>

Adventurehouse.com/history.htm – Pulp genre history

<http://www.adventurehouse.com/history.htm>

Pulp Fiction Central – The Vintage Library (google it)

<http://www.vintagelibrary.com/pulpfiction/PulpFictionCentral.php>

**Note:** This lesson may be used as an extension of or in tandem with the lesson, “Defining Pop Culture” found in *Ontario, Curriculum for English, Grades 11 and 12*.

## **APPENDIX A: STORY OPENINGS FOR GROUP STUDY**

“I Was the Moll of a Hot Car Mob”, *Sensational Crime Confessions*, p. 33, paragraphs 1-6 of the story

“Defeat of a Champion”, *Yarns*, pp. 5-6, paragraphs 1-7 of the story

“Dead Men Do Talk”, *Yarns*, p.23, paragraphs 1-9 of the story

“The Blank Paper Clue”, *Yarns*, p.31, paragraphs 1-9 of the story

“Badlands Purge”, *Yarns*, pp. 39 and 40, section 1 of the story

“The Rescue”, *Yarns*, pp. 61-62, section 1 of the story

“The Talking Heads”, *Uncanny Tales*, pp. 33-34, paragraphs 1-11 of the story

“Murder in the Graveyard”, *Uncanny Tales*, pp. 1-2, paragraphs 1-16 of the story

“Sharks”, *Uncanny Tales*, pp. 16-17, paragraphs 1-8 of the story

“Les aventures amoureuses d’un ‘lumberjack’”, *Les Drames de l’amour*, p. 3, paragraphes 1-12

“Combats sanglant”, *Histoires de cow-boys*, p. 3, paragraphes 1-20

“Santa-Claus et ses pareils”, *Histoires de cow-boys*, p. 24, paragraphes 1-15

“Le cow-boy au coeur tendre”, *Histoires de cow-boys*, p. 28, paragraphes 1-15

“Le Perroquet des prairies”, *Histoires de cow-boys*, p. 31, paragraphes 1-15