

Prime Ministers quiz

The Man

1. He was the first PM with neither an English or French background.
2. He genuinely liked people - including political opponents - and had a legendary memory for names and faces.
3. A British high commissioner made this comment: "My wife says after a conversation with him she feels as if the cat had licked her all over and she ought to go and have a bath."
4. He was focused, a gifted listener, somebody who understood the point of view of others, tolerant, patient, likeable, humble, modest, flexible, and a person of simple tastes.
5. When CBC viewers cast their ballots in 2004 for the greatest Canadian, this PM was ranked number eight - one place behind Don Cherry.
6. When he entered politics, his salary declined from \$50,000 (as a corporate lawyer), to \$12,000 as a federal cabinet minister.
7. Before he became prime minister, he had been all over the world, had a PhD, worked for the Rockefellers in New York and written a book stressing the need to bring people together. He had also been a deputy minister and a federal cabinet minister.
8. Canada's first French-Canadian PM and an imposing figure: tall, dignified and a splendid speaker in either language.
9. He was idealistic and visionary as well as intellectual and detached; indeed he did not know the names of some of his own caucus.
10. He was part of an unsuccessful bid on the construction of the parliament buildings in Ottawa.
11. He was a man of great charisma, but also was described by one of his cabinet colleagues as "tempestuous, egocentric and lacking in magnanimity".
12. He was a remarkably good recruiter; he had three future PMs in his cabinet as well as four former Deputy Ministers.
13. He was known for his frugality; when PM, he lamented having to spend \$128 on a politically necessary banquet.
14. In his final year at college, he edited the school newspaper and finished first; he also became a federal public servant in 1949 at the Privy Council in Ottawa.

The Policies

1. During his tenure, the first Canadian-born Governor General was appointed.
2. Key accomplishments included: the Bill of Rights, a vigorous new agricultural policy, the appointment of the first woman cabinet minister, the appointment of the first Indigenous person to the Senate and an amendment that allowed First Nations members to vote without giving up their "status".
3. Many of his policies seemed controversial at the time: bilingualism, multiculturalism, a strong federalist response to Quebec nationalism, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
4. Shortly after his resignation, he was perceived to be a weak leader but his domestic legislative accomplishments include: the Canada Pension Plan, lowering the eligibility age for the Old Age Security from 70 to 65, Medicare, the federal minimum wage, the Divorce Act, official bilingualism, the Canada Student Loan Program, abolition of capital punishment, and decriminalization of contraception.

5. Among his achievements are: the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the establishment of the North West Mounted Police, Canada's first Labour legislation and the implementation of the National Policy of tariff protection.
6. His achievements include four key east-west infrastructure projects: the construction of the St Lawrence Seaway, the TransCanada Pipeline, the TransCanada Highway and the creation of the CBC and Radio-Canada television networks as well as the creation of the National Library and the Canada Council.
7. Our guest speaker described him as "the most successful and important political leader" Canada has had, noting his "clear vision, grounded in national unity". The speaker went on to say that as well as leading Canada into war, this PM "laid the foundation of the Canadian welfare state and was a magician of cabinet and party politics," who led Canada's "disengagement" from the British Empire while maintaining strong support for Britain, and kept Canada out of "the bony lap of the United States."
8. Although a Roman Catholic, he supported Manitoba's right to close its Catholic schools; he created the beginnings of an independent Canadian foreign policy by setting up the External Affairs department; the Department of Labour was also created in his tenure.
9. He was regarded as a champion of the progressive ideas of his day; he believed government should be involved in ownership of ambitious public infrastructure projects; he found the patronage and corruption that characterized Canadian government at that time distasteful and thus laid the foundation for a professional public service. It was also under his watch that women first voted in federal elections and federal income taxes were imposed as a temporary measure.
10. His government was responsible for the secret ballot for Canadian elections, the founding of the Royal Military College, the creation of the Supreme Court and the Office of the Auditor General as well as the extension of door-to-door mail service to all major Canadian cities.

Answers to the PM quiz

The Man

1. John G. Diefenbaker
2. Sir John A. Macdonald
3. William Lyon Mackenzie King
4. Lester B. Pearson
5. Sir John A Macdonald
6. Louis St Laurent
7. William Lyon Mackenzie King
8. Sir Wifrid Laurier
9. Sir Robert Borden
10. Alexander Mackenzie
11. John G. Diefenbaker
12. Lester B. Pearson
13. Alexander Mackenzie
14. Pierre E. Trudeau

The Policies

1. Louis St Laurent
2. John G. Diefenbaker
3. Pierre E. Trudeau
4. Lester B. Pearson
5. Sir John A Macdonald
6. Louis St Laurent
7. William Lyon Mackenzie King
8. Sir Wifrid Laurier
9. Sir Robert Borden
10. Alexander Mackenzie