

# HISTORY AT HOME



## MAIL-ORDER CATALOGUES

In the early 1900s, as goods became more available and more affordable, both settlers and Indigenous people in British Columbia were able to purchase tools and supplies that made their lives easier and more comfortable. Of course, not everyone needed or wanted the same things, so General Stores carried a wide variety of items so that everyone could buy what they were looking for.

Sometimes though, the General Store did not have all the items that a customer wanted, or a person lived too far away from a General Store, and that's when the customer could turn to the mail-order catalogue. Large department stores in Canada like Eaton's, Simpson's, and Woodward's, offered printed books full of their merchandise, so that people who lived far from their stores could still buy their products. These catalogues carried almost everything a person could want –you could even order an entire house through the Eaton's mail-order catalogue!

### **If you want to use Mail-Order Catalogues to inspire at-home learning:**

#### **1. Discuss mail-order catalogues. Some ideas to get you started:**

- a. What is a department store?
- b. Do department stores still exist? Are there any in the community where you live?
- c. Why do you think mail-order catalogues are not used very much anymore?

#### **2. Make a shopping list:**

- a. Dust off your math skills. Imagine it is 1917 and you have \$2.00 to spend on your shopping. \$2.00 in 1917 would be worth almost \$35.00 today!
- b. Use your imagination to put yourself in the shoes of other people who were shopping in 1917. Use the worksheets below to make a shopping list for different people who might have different needs.



- c. Didn't find what you were looking for? Order from the full catalogue! Go shopping in Eaton's 1917 Spring/Summer catalogue, digitized by the University of Toronto for the Internet Archive and provided here by the Toronto Public Library:  
[static.torontopubliclibrary.ca/da/pdfs/eatons191700eatouoft.pdf](http://static.torontopubliclibrary.ca/da/pdfs/eatons191700eatouoft.pdf).
- 3. **Go further:**
  - a. Learn more about mail-order catalogues courtesy of the Canadian Museum of History. Their online exhibit is full of historical information and resources for learning more about catalogues and their role in Canada's history, including games and activities for all grade levels. Find it at:  
[www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/cpm/catalog/catoooooe.html](http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/cpm/catalog/catoooooe.html).
  - b. Compare prices through the years with Bank of Canada's inflation calculator: [www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/](http://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/).

# Items for Order



Iron - \$0.50



Kettle - \$0.70



Fabric - \$0.25/yard



Cookware - \$0.50



Soap - \$0.05/bar



Sugar - \$0.25/5 lbs.



Flour - \$0.15/5 lbs.



Candy - \$0.45/box



Coffee- \$0.30/lb.



Tea - \$0.40/lb.



You have two dollars to spend on your catalogue order. Spend the money as if you live in the area and are buying items for yourself. Write the items you would buy below.

**ITEM**

**PRICE**


**Total:** \_\_\_\_\_



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