**Model Synectics Lessons: Sir John A. Macdonald and Leadership**

Concept:

When he first became Prime Minister, John A. Macdonald is probably both excited and intimidated by the prospect. Make a connection for the students between their lives and that of this historical figure, a man who was in charge of Canada over one hundred twenty-five years ago. Because students might not have much understanding of the kind of power which Macdonald had, have them instead think about what contributes to their own feelings of power and powerlessness: **living in their parents' homes**.

Begin the discussion with some questions that should involve everyone:

Warm-up:

1.How many of you live on your own? (Sometimes as many as 2 or 3 will indicate so.)

2.How many would like to be living on your own? (Many, often most.)

3.How many feel ready to be on your own? (Usually not as many as for #2.)

Brainstorm: What things will you need to think about/plan for/prepare in order to move out and live on your own? Students suggest things like:

•find a place to live

•pay rent

•get a job to be able to pay rent

•shop for groceries, make meals

•buy furniture & other necessities

•manage money, pay bills

•hosting parties

How will it feel to do this?

•independent, happy, responsible, scared, lonely, excited, worried, free

Notice that some of these feelings are contradictory. Pair words that seem to have

opposing meanings (compressed conflicts):

•lonely/free

•happy/scared

•responsible/independent

•worried/excited

Direct analogy:

How is Macdonald’s situation like that of a young person moving out on his/her own?

Students recognize that Macdonald is facing a new situation, which offers him power and responsibility such as he has never had, as does a young person facing life alone. They see that he will have some planning to do, and that he will have to solve his problems on his own. (etc....)

Personal analogy:

How would it feel to be Macdonald at this point?

Students recognize that he is probably scared of both the power and the responsibility,

but is nevertheless intrigued by it. He would also be feeling worried and excited, happy

and scared, etc.

Assignment:

You (the students) are Macdonald. Write a letter to a close friend (in whom you can

confide anything), telling of your election and expressing the feelings you have about

your new job.

As a result of the synectics exercise in identifying compressed conflicts, the students are

able to assume the character of Macdonald and write about his conflicting feelings of

ambition and fear, loyalty and temptation, pride and humility.