

Historica Canada Education Portal

Choosing a National First World War Monument

Overview

Which of the eight First World War battlefield memorial sites awarded to Canada would be the best location for a monument to express the national identity and role of Canada in the war?

Aims

Appreciate how the forces of nationalism have shaped and continue to shape Canada and the world.

Explore a range of expressions of nationalism.

Appreciate historical and contemporary attempts to develop a national identity.

Analyze methods used by individuals, groups and governments in Canada to promote a national identity (symbolism, mythology, institutions, government programs and initiatives).

Activities

Critical Challenge: Which of the eight First World War battlefield memorial sites awarded to Canada would be the best location for a monument to express the national identity and role of Canada in the war?

Opener: Present students with two articles that illustrate differing viewpoints about where the memorial should have been placed

1. Students can watch the [CBC archived video](#) on the 70th anniversary of Vimy including an interview with a survivor. Or, Students can watch [the CBC archived video](#) on the 75th anniversary which includes a discussion with Pierre Burton and Desmond Morton. These three articles/videos all allow teachers to develop a discussion

2. Students should be given a copy the article, [Vimy Ridge: The Making of a Myth](#) as another point of view on the importance of Vimy. Discussion should follow this article.

3. Students will choose one of the eight First World War battlefields that were assigned to Canada after the armistice:

"A few months after the November 11, 1918, Armistice (end of the First World War), it was agreed that Canada would be awarded eight* battle sites for commemoration by the governments of Belgium and France as a sign of thanks for our help in liberating their countries. Each of these sites represented significant Canadian engagements. For that reason it was originally decided that each battlefield would be treated equally; all eight of them would be graced with identical monuments. With that in mind, the newly created Canadian Battlefields Memorials Commission (CBMC) launched a national architectural and design competition in December 1920."

**Belgium: Saint-Julien, Passchendaele, Hill 62 (Sanctuary Wood)*

**France: Hill 145 (Vimy) Dury, Bourslon Wood, Courcellette, Le Quesnel*

A good beginning site for each of these battlefields can be found [here](#).

Students should either develop a criteria for a national war monument, or teachers can use a criteria such as:

- Importance of the battle to Canada Importance to the entire war effort
- Geographic location
- Purpose of the memorial – what memory will this place hold for Canadians in the future?

Differentiated learning: Students could be given the task of designing the monument.

4. Presentation and consensus: Student groups should present their proposal on why the memorial should be placed at a specific location. Presentation must include logical justification and evidence to support their claim. Classroom discussion should lead to a consensus of one main location, and perhaps an alternative.

5. Debriefing & Metacognition: Students should be directed in a discussion regarding the methods used by the government to promote national identity, and perhaps the changing role of memorial sites over time.

Enrichment and Extension: Students could decide on a location and design of a national Second World War memorial in Europe.

Resources

[National War Memorial – The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[Monuments of the First and Second World War – The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[Vimy Ridge - The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[Sir Arthur Currie - The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[Vimy Ridge: Bloody Easter \(Feature\) - The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[Vimy Ridge and the Birth of a Nation - The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[Vimy a Stunning Memorial and a Live Minefield \(Maclean's\) - The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)