

Historica Canada Education Portal

Reflecting on Responsibility

Overview

This lesson will introduce the students to the role of the stretcher bearer in the First World War. Often it is the soldier in the trench who is remembered for his bravery and duty, risking his life for his country. It is important to remember that in war, as in society, there are other roles, such as the stretcher bearers, who also have an important responsibility. These cannot be overlooked. Students will explore and discover the experiences of the stretcher bearer through poetry, prose, and illustration. Using the information gathered they will create an image using selected media to depict this important war-time role.

Aims

Social Sciences: History and Citizenship Education

- Examines social phenomena from a historical perspective
- finds out about the context of the period
- shows a concern for the belief, attitudes and values of the period
- attentive to traces in the present of social phenomena of the past

Background

This lesson can be part of a larger lesson based on the idea of 'responsibility'. It is designed to help students develop their understanding of this concept that has, for the most part, become a 'buzz' word they have heard all of their lives. Being 'responsible' or taking 'responsibility' must be understood as being intrinsic, not extrinsic, and not doing something because someone else told them to do it. After initial discussion and developing a "what is responsibility 'checklist'", students can begin to explore responsibility in certain historical contexts, such as this one in the First World War. Additional 'brush-up' lessons on the First World War and trench warfare may be required at this point, depending on the level of competency of the students. Finally, after students have created a work illustrating the responsibility of the stretcher bearer, they will explore the social phenomena of responsibility through a role within our modern society using an interview procedure. Some comparisons can then be made between the beliefs, attitudes and values of the two time periods/societal roles.

Activities

Time Allowance: Approximately 3 (45-50mins) periods

Procedures:

1 This lesson can be opened one of two ways, depending on the amount of time available.

A qualified person in First Aid/CPR could come in and briefly explain

procedures and how to help someone in trouble. What is the responsibility of the witnesses?

A plausible/realistic scenario can be given to the students, one in which there is a problem and the student has to react, e.g. ski hill accident, household injury, helping the elderly, etc. This will be linked with the already-established concept of responsibility and why responsibility is relevant/important in medical/health situations.

2. Students will then brainstorm the 'stretcher bearer' role, thinking about his responsibilities based on what they can deduce so far. The teacher could use questions and a short overview of the job to help guide thinking in order to produce relevant brainstorms. Eg: What did this job entail? What were the risks/dangers involved? How was this job important to the success of the missions? General information is available from some of the websites listed.

3. Students will be introduced to various resources they can use to learn more about the stretcher bearer experience. Using note-keeping boxes (NKB*), students will gather information from various sources that show what it would be like for the stretcher bearer to fulfil his responsibility, i.e. what he did, what he saw, what he felt while fulfilling his duty (about 20-30 NKBs would be sufficient).

4. Students will then organise their information into abstract ideas that may connect to the idea of the role's responsibility, e.g. fears, perseverance, desires, etc. Discussions to share and expand on work may be useful here.

5. In the follow-up lesson, students will use the information to create a representation of "the First World War Stretcher Bearer". The guidelines

for this can be given by the teacher as they see fit, or students can be given free reign, knowing that the work must show the responsibility of the stretcher bearer within the particular historical context. A relevant rubric is to be developed. 6. Enrichment. Students could explore the social phenomena of responsibility through a role within our modern society using an interview procedure. Some comparisons can then be made between the beliefs, attitudes and values of the two time periods/societal roles. Students could also partake in the "Lest We Forget" Project and research a stretcher bearer from the First World War in order to create a more specific picture and to follow him through his final days of service.

Evaluation:

The teacher can develop a rubric for the final product as he/she sees fit in order to evaluate the product the student created that illustrated the stretcher bearer's role.

Required Materials:

-Resources as above, Internet access, note-keeping boxes*, blank paper

Note keeping boxes (NKB) is a strategy used to gather information from a piece of text. Students read a short piece of text to each other and repeat back the important concept or idea from what was read. Student will then write down that idea in 5 words or less (numbers and symbols don't count as words). This NKB must stand alone as a complete thought, though it doesn't have to be a complete sentence.

Resources

The following resources are highly recommended for this lesson along

with any other relevant materials.

From a Stretcher Handle: The World War I Journal and Poems of Pte. Frank Walker. Edited by Mary F. Gaudet, 2000. ISBN 0-919013-40-6

["To Stretcher Bearers", by Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy \(1883-1929\)](#)

["All the Old Boys are Going", By Lisa Smedman](#) - staff writer, Vancouver Courier, published on November 6th, 2005.