

# Historica Canada Education Portal

## Vimy Glide

### Overview

The students will be analyzing the organization of the Canadian Army. Students will be able to identify the basic command structure and composition of the Canadian Army for both the First and Second World Wars. They will perform a platoon maneuver according to specific objectives in this lesson they will attempt to re-enact the Vimy Glide that was used during the First World War.

### Aims

Students should become more familiar and comfortable with understanding the different units and divisions within the Canadian Army.

Students will plan, organize, and execute a platoon exercise or objective (in this case the Vimy Glide), outside of the classroom on a designated "battleground."

### Background

Too often in all the readings that we have students do references are made in regards to a regiment, a division, a brigade etc, and their

involvement during a battle or their involvement in the war. Students do not have any concept about the strength, size and equipment associated with these units. Students should be able to comprehend the size of these units and the implications that it would have for that particular event or battle. Students need to know more about the numbers associated with the various units and the battle plans that go with specific battle agendas. Once students understand what a platoon is in terms of size and strength, they need to experience what a platoon would look like in an actual maneuver. The class will be divided into a platoon and be given a task that they have to accomplish within a period.

## **Activities**

**Time Allowance:** 3 hours

## **Procedures:**

Objective One: Students will make their own organization flow chart that will break down the Canadian army into its most basic form. Students will keep this flow chart in their notebook to act as a reference guide. This flow chart should start from the basic unit section (10 men) and finish at the army level. It should include the Rank of the Commander associated with each level and the strength of each unit. Most of this information can be found on pages 502-503 in the book *We Stand on Guard*. Students can also find the badges of the Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1918 in this book. If these resources aren't available, the information can be found online. With this information, students can research where a soldier came from and trace their origin within the army. For example they may find a soldier who served in the Machine Gun Corps, in the 1st Canadian Division, 2nd Brigade, 7th Battalion. In this book *We Stand on Guard* the

student can also locate and identify the badges associated with the different units.

### Objective Two: Vimy Glide Exercise

Students were taught that a basic platoon in the Great War was divided into three to four different sections. One section was the assault section, one was the rifle section and the third section was the Lewis gun section. Students researched what the basic objective of each section was trying to accomplish. Students researched information on the Lewis gun. Students also researched information with the techniques used at Vimy Ridge to allow men to advance under the fire of the creeping barrage. It is here that they learned about the 3 minute advancement per 100 meters or the Vimy Glide. Students researched what a soldier would carry into battle in terms of equipment and the weight associated with that equipment.

*H Platoon is required to maneuver 3 sections of men 100 meters, at which time the artillery barrage will be lifted and then H Platoon will be assigned the task of closing the last 100 meters and capture the Trench section known as the Teacher Trench. In order to capture this trench they must get at least three grenades into the Teacher Trench or the Lewis gun section has to enter the trench. Students will do the Vimy Glide the length of one football field then turn around and go back to attack the teacher's trench.*

As Platoon Commander, you, Lieutenant (student's name) \_\_\_\_\_, must inform your section leaders of the mission that is required of them.

Maps must be given out to the men that will display the terrain and obstacles that they will have to overcome. These obstacles will include

barbed wire, huge craters in the ground that must be bypassed, plus two machine gun firing areas. The football field will have sections marked off as barbed wire and tarps will be tacked down and represent creators that require movement around.

The advancement of the platoon will be scheduled according to a specific time allotment. They must follow the advancement of the barrage within the allotted time of 3 minutes per 100 yards.

Any wounded soldier will unfortunately remain upon the battlefield until medics can recover the wounded. The Lewis gun section must make sure that the Lewis gun stays engaged throughout the attack.

### **Evaluation:**

Students will watch the video tape of the H platoon assault on the Teachers Trench. Students were required to write a one to two page synopsis on what they learned from this experience. They are required to state what was successful about the mission and what failed. The students are required to hand in their maps of the 100 meters that they had to cross.

### **Conditions for the Exercise**

The boundaries and obstacles of the field have been marked by pylons. The students are given the dimensions of these obstacles so that they can mark them on their maps. Where the machine gun pits have been established they will be in the form of two teachers throwing water balloons at the troops. If students come in contact with the spray of the water, they must assume that they have been either killed in action or are wounded. Students should be wearing shorts so that if they are sprayed

by the water balloons they know that they have been wounded and therefore will be out of commission. At the front of the Teachers Trench will be another machine gun pit that has to be overcome. The Teachers Trench would be made out of gym mats. The raid will end when the grenade or the Lewis gun sections enter the trench. The grenades will be in the form of bean bags. One grenade section will have at least 3 grenades per person. All members of your assault platoon will be required to bring a back pack that will support at least 40 pounds of equipment on their person. Have someone video tape this event.

## **Resources**

*We Stand on Guard, An Illustrated History of the Canadian Army.* John Marteinson, 1992 Ovale Publications

*At Vimy Ridge Canada's Greatest World War I Victory.* Hugh Brewster, Scholastic Canada Ltd.

[Veterans Affairs Canada](#)

[The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[National Defense and the Canadian Armed Forces](#)

[Canadian Soldiers - Ranks and Responsibilities](#)

