

# Historica Canada Education Portal

## Remembrance Day: Memories, Letters, Sacrifice

### Aims

Students should:

- Know that democracy depends on the participation of the citizens
- Participate appropriately and effectively in groups
- Research for specific information
- Demonstrate an attitude of acceptance of diverse values
- Read, view and listen effectively to gather ideas and information
- Classify and present pertinent information in logical order.

Students should be able to :

- Present ideas clearly and at a rate that enables others to follow
- Explain personal viewpoint clearly
- Respond to questions and comments precisely and clearly
- Justify and support opinions

Students will:

- Read for a variety of purposes including to gather information, follow directions, give a response, form an opinion, understand information, and to enjoy and appreciate
- Make connections to prior knowledge and experiences (i.e., relate text to self, text to other texts, and text to world)
- Write to create personal and fictional narratives (e.g., multi-paragraph personal, imaginary, or historical narrative)
- Participate in conversation and in small group and whole group discussion, showing an understanding of when to speak and when to

listen

- Recognize the main ideas and supporting details
- Evaluate the effectiveness of a range of visual works
- Draw conclusions based on evidence in visual text.

Common Essential Learnings (CELS)

- Communication, Critical and Creative Thinking
- Personal and Social Values and Skills
- Independent Learning, Numeracy, Technological Literacy

## **Activities**

### **Procedures:**

*Topic One: Providing the Context: Conflict*

1. List and explore the different types of conflict in the world, e.g. among friends, within families, between cultures, in sports, between countries, etc. Are their general causes of conflict present in all of the above categories? E.g power, greed, misunderstanding, fear, pride, etc.
2. List the current and past conflicts we know of between countries.
3. Do countries fight for the same reasons individuals do?
4. Outline the general causes of the First and Second World Wars, incorporating the answers provided by the discussion to this point.
5. Given the context provided by the discussion to this point, explore the question: *"what action(s) should a citizen in a democracy take when his/her country is at war? What are his or her obligations?"* Accept all

reasonable answers: e.g sign up to fight, oppose war as morally wrong and never justified, discuss and debate the merits of the particular war, contribute in an essential service as a non-combatant, pay taxes and let the professional army do the job etc. Explain that Canadians experienced this same wide range of reactions when war was declared in 1914 and 1939.

6. Many Canadians opted to sign up and join the armed forces during both wars. What motivated them to do so? Accept all reasonable answers: e.g economic necessity, patriotism, desire for an adventure, to escape a bad family situation, friends were joining up, revulsion at Nazism etc.

### *Topic 2: The First World War*

1. Remind students that the event that actually propelled Canadians into this war was the invasion of neutral Belgium by the Germans, although the alliance system among the European powers was a large underlying cause. When the invasion of Belgium caused the British to declare war, Canada was automatically at war; but we could decide on the level of contribution that we would make. Why did many Canadians sign up to fight a “European war” when the Americans (for instance) opted to sit it out in 1914? Refer to the last item in the conflict discussion as a possible reference point.

2. Explain briefly the sufferings endured and sacrifices made at battles like Second Ypres, Vimy Ridge, and Passchendaele. Highlight, as well, Canadian achievements in these places.

3. Show pictures of Tyne Cot Cemetery and the Menin Memorial in Ypres or other examples of First World War cemeteries/memorials. These are

easily obtained through a Google image search. Be sure to read the inscriptions on some of the individual gravestones—especially the often personalized engravings on the bottom. Have students research the number of dead buried or memorialized in these cemeteries/memorials and then, in order to display the magnitude of the sacrifice, have them find towns or cities in Canada (within the students' Province or Territory) with populations of this size.

Optional: Using the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) website or the Canadian Virtual War Memorial website locate the grave of a student's relative or of someone listed on a local cenotaph.

4. Have students participate in the interactive activity trench warfare activity “Over the Top” located on the Canadian War Museum's website.

5. A soldier's story: either here or during the exploration of the Second World War, examine as a group the package of materials provided by the Canadian Archives in Ottawa officially documenting a soldier's experiences during this war. Soldiers' names can be taken from a local cenotaph, supplied by students who have family members who served, or provided by the teacher. To order these materials see link to Library and Archives Canada (Lest We Forget Project) in Resources section.

6. Show students a “Circumstances of Death or Missing Report” which was received by families. Ask them to provide some specific details of the impact such a letter would have on a family by assigning each student the role of a member of the family e.g. ten-year-old sister, sixty-five-year old grandfather, forty-year-old mother etc. and having him/her write a half page diary account containing his/her reaction.

*Topic 3: Second World War*

1. Briefly explain the causes of the war, noting that this time Canada declared war independently of Great Britain. Britain declared 3 September 1939 while Canada waited until 10 September 1939.
2. Operation Jubilee, Dieppe: Explore the reasons for the raid. What were the objectives? Distribute a map outlining the operation. Show pictures of the beaches of Dieppe and the cliffs overlooking the beaches using the Google image search. Ask students to interpret this data and predict what problems might occur for Canadians during the raid.
3. Explain the extent of the sacrifice made by Canadian soldiers at Dieppe. Show images of the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery at Dieppe (Google image search "Dieppe Canadian War Cemetery"). Note how the Canadian war dead are buried head to head instead of all being forward facing which is the normal practice in British/Canadian war cemeteries. This is because the Germans initially buried them.
4. Explore the connection between Dieppe and your community, Province, or Territory.
5. Explore the question: What was learned at Dieppe?
6. Read aloud some accounts of life during the war from a book like Barry Broadfoot's *Six War Years 1939-1945* (out of print but easily obtained on Amazon.ca). Ask students to summarize some of these experiences. Are there common threads? Is anything missing from these accounts?
7. Operation Overlord, Normandy: Explore the differences between the experience at Juno Beach and those at Dieppe. What changes were made to make this raid successful? Use a map of Juno Beach. Compare

what happened at Juno beach to the greater carnage on Omaha Beach as depicted at the beginning of *Saving Private Ryan*.

8. What would your emotions have been if you were on one of the landing crafts heading for Juno Beach?

9. Letters and diaries of the war: Have each student choose a letter or diary entry from one of the World Wars from family archives or various websites, examples of which are listed in Resources above. Letters can be either to a soldier or from a soldier. Students will need to discuss the general contents of these letters and diary entries and, if applicable, identify what is missing from them and why (consider censorship). Students will write their own letter or diary entry containing experiences similar to those contained in the accounts from *Six War Years 1939-1945* and the letters and diaries they examined.

#### *Topic Four: Coming Home*

1. What would be the joys experienced in returning to Canada by those who fought overseas?

2. What might be some difficulties these soldiers might have experienced in coming home?

3. Explain how those who had lost a family member might have felt when the other soldiers returned.

4. If available, read aloud the short story "A Hero's Welcome" in *Crossroads 8*, p. 59. Some questions for the class to explore after reading are:

- How are the experiences of the boy and his father similar to and different from the students' predictions about the joys and difficulties facing returning veterans?
- How will both the father and Thomas have changed in the four years since the father left for the war?
- What future adjustments will the boy and his father face?
- Why had the father kept his medals concealed?
- Contrast the attitude of Thomas' father with that of James McKinley's father who has also returned from overseas. Account for the differences.
- Now that we have finished our unit explain what the father means when he says that during the war he did "Pretty much what every other soldier did over there."

## **Resources**

Broadfoot, Barry. ~~Six War Years 1939-1945.~~ Toronto: Doubleday Canada Ltd, 1974.

Godfrey, Jeanne, Maria Carty, and Mike Ouellette. ~~Crossroads 8.~~ Toronto: Gage, 2000.

[The Memory Project](#)

[Canada at War](#)

[Juno Beach Centre Association](#)

[Canadian Letters and Images Project](#)

[Canadian Virtual War Memorial](#)

[Canadian War Museum interactive activity “Over the Top”](#)

[Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#)

[Lest We Forget Project](#)

[First World War – The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[Second World War – The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)