

Historica Canada Education Portal

Seeing Red: The Battle of the Somme

Overview

The primary goal of this lesson is to help students to understand the importance of the Battle of the Somme during the First World War and its effects on Canada and Newfoundland.

Aims

- Students will gain a greater understanding and appreciation of a specific aspect of the Great War
- To familiarize students with the military contributions and human sacrifice of the Newfoundland Regiment in the Great War
- To enhance the students' understanding of the inherent difficulties and deplorable conditions of trench warfare
- To involve the students in the utilization of both primary and secondary sources when conducting historical research
- To provide the students with an in-depth understanding of the human toll that war exacts, not only on soldiers but on entire communities
- To demonstrate an ability to distinguish bias, prejudice, stereotyping, or a lack of substantiation in statements, arguments, and opinions
- To organize research findings, using a variety of methods and forms (e.g., note taking; graphs and charts, maps and diagrams)

Background

This project is a great way to introduce students (of many levels) to the realities of the Great War, particularly the Battle of the Somme. The particular project and presentation will be introduced as part of a unit of study on Canada's role in the First World War. The contribution of the Newfoundland Regiment at Beaumont-Hamel will be discussed in class. Students will have the opportunity to explore and analyze many aspects of war.

Activities

Procedures:

Introduction

As an introduction to this activity, students can be briefed on Canada's participation in the First World War, the global circumstances which sparked the war, and/or conduct an exercise to familiarize themselves with the map of France (and Europe) in 1914.

Lesson Development

1. Ask students to brainstorm (individually or in a group) all that they know about France during the war, and the Battle of the Somme (if anything). Expand the brainstorm if necessary. What do students know about Canada's contribution to the First World War? What was warfare

like at the beginning of the twentieth century? What kind of international alliances existed? Hand out the [KWL Worksheet](#). Based on this brainstorming session, students should fill out the "What I Know" section.

2. Ask students to create groups (if they haven't already) and discuss their findings. What questions do they still have? What information and answers do they feel they are missing? Students should fill out the "What I Want to Know" section of the worksheet.

3. View at least two of the video clips recommended in the Resources section. Allow these to prompt a class discussion? What did the students learn? What did they already know? Did anything surprise them? Do they feel these are accurate representations of the Battle of the Somme?

In order to guide the viewing of the videos, students should try to answer the following questions while watching:

- *When did the battle take place?*
- *Explain the circumstances surrounding the Battle of the Somme.*
- *Why did so many men lose their lives at the Battle of the Somme?*

4. Ask students to compare the video vs. the brainstorming sheet to reveal their misconceptions about the Battle of the Somme. While watching the videos (or afterwards), students should fill out the "What I've Learned" section of the KWL worksheet; this information will help guide them through the rest of the activity. Ask students to present their findings in groups. If there is a computer lab available, students can prepare a powerpoint. Otherwise, chart paper can be used.

5. The students do a discussion around in their group. They will look at the following:

- Trench warfare
- Soldiers fatigue
- Inadequate artillery
- The Generals

When students look at a page of information, they examine the pictures and photographs first. Illustrations have the effects of engaging students and motivating them to read or search for information related to the pictures. They are also useful for building concepts, drawing inferences, making generalizations, initiating inquiry, and formulating hypotheses. Students should organize their findings and prepare a poster and a report. They may include photographs. Their report should reflect their knowledge about the Battle of the Somme, and additional research should be done in order to complement what they've learned from class activities.

Conclusion: Presentation

The posters should be approximately 20 minutes. Students will present their poster.

Resources

[First Day of the Somme Map](#)

[Heritage Minutes](#)

[The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

Videos

1. [The Battle of the Somme film](#)
2. [Battle of the Somme - Real Footage](#)
3. [The First Day of The Somme](#)
4. [Corporal William Clark - Somme 1916](#)
5. [The Somme - Sneak Peek Part I](#)
6. [The Somme - Sneak Peek Part II](#)
7. [The Somme - From Defeat To Victory - Part 2](#)