

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN: THE LAST HUNDRED DAYS

Activity #4 Worksheet

Use this worksheet to support Activity 4 of *Think Like a Historian: The Last Hundred Days* Education Guide.

Read the selected ten excerpts from Claudius Corneloup's *Epic of the 22nd Battalion* as a basis for the exercises in Activity 4.

Teacher Tip: These excerpts are written at a high reading level.
You may want to read and unpack them with your class.

Click [here](#) to read the entirety of Corneloup's book from Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec. Note that it is available only in French.

1. "It's not scholarly work that I offer to the readers who are interested in the 22nd Battalion (French-Canadian). Departing from all literary etiquette and banishing the style and lies of art, as well as all its artifices, neglecting the fake embellishment of great truths, I sought to free myself from adhering to these tragic events, always human, and to turn them into a simple composition of emotions rather than a work of science, written as my pen went, haphazardly, from one day to the next, appropriately, to offer to the humble, the grandfathers, the mothers, the women, the betrothed and the children of our soldiers who died for their country." (p.7)

2. "I wrote these pages for all of those who suffered, lived and cried in the trenches; I wrote for all the wounded that generously gave their blood, for all the friends and parents of the fallen; I wrote for those who dressed our wounds, who helped us, and for the holy souls who prayed for us." (p.7)

3. "A Battalion may go unnoticed; a Brigade attracts attention. In this movement of troops, there wasn't just a division, but the entire Canadians Corps [...]"

The excitement was extraordinary. On the roads and in the fields, Battalions were following Battalions; cavalry was massed along the wooded slopes; at the pawing and neighing of the horses, the heavy artillery, installed on powerful tractors, squeaked in the ruts; the tanks were rushing in, dull, muffled masses, roaring quietly; and, even further away, colourless spots, earth coloured, grouped in a heaving expanse, overflowing with men and supplies, buried in the twilight." (p.125)

4. "Our turn came at ten forty-five. In artillery formation, the soldiers of the 22nd passed over the 18th Battalion. The village was overrun. At that point, a German plane flew above us and signalled our presence with two flares. The instant became critical. We were bombarded with ten shells per second. We ran forward. A new threat. The German gunners, hidden behind trees and bushes, were offering a fierce resistance; they retreated methodically, causing losses as they went.

The tanks kept relentlessly at their task of destruction, sowing a diabolical terror. The advanced and returned, skirting around the enemy's positions, crushing them or forcing them to run, constantly followed by the phalanxes of Courcellette, Ypres, Vimy, Lens and Passchendaele, in unending lines." (p.128)

5. "The field [at Arras] was plowed between the two lines to such an extent that it looked like the beaten fields at Vimy. [...]"

Of the fringes of the two armies observing each other in the dark, ours had all the disadvantages. Sunken in a crypt, paralyzed, it seemed touched by some frightful darkness. Stuck and driven into marshy fields of an untrustworthy consistency, plowed by innumerable ruts with muddy landslides and subjected to rigorous observation, the army couldn't move without being noticed. The other, on the contrary, was solidly raised on a plateau fed by a profusion of roads that facilitated the transport of supplies, reinforcement, and, if needed, retreat. The other, the enemy army, was watching its prey, amassing its machine guns, marching its light 37 caliber canons. The army, feeling defeated, knows that soon enough it will have to abandon its hiding place, will have to flee, flee, distraught [...] Retreating, yes, but inch by inch, defended fiercely." (p.138)

6. "[At the Battle of la Scarpe] Colonel Dubuc fell while leading his men; Major Vanier lost a leg; Majors Routier, Roy and Archambault, Captain Morgan, Lieutenants Lamothe and Lemieux; here's the list of decorated men who were extinguished, all the glory of the past blazes in a bloody apotheosis. Captain Morgan, despite numerous desperate efforts, stayed in that miserable no man's land for thirty-six hours.

Of the 22 officers that took part in this Homeric battle, not a single one was spared. Of the 600 shock troops, only 70 were able to muster. The conquered position was maintained. [...]

And behind the lines, amongst the legions of the dead, inarticulate sounds rose to the heavens: souls in distress pleading for help; broken hearts abandoning the path of life; broken bodies who had suffered too much in this skin [...]

When, at night, silence came again, a soft lament like the singing of a psalm flew up to the shining stars. It was a living painting, sublime, where all of war's poetry reached its purest form: 300 of our wounded were dreaming, asleep in a bed of dew." (p.139)

7. "The 22nd was sent to Croisilles, then to Fontaines and to Quéant, on the Hindenburg line. Subjected to the violence of aerial and long-range bombing, the 22nd kept going. Step by step, forced marches through this country covered in barbed wire, in torrential rains, through the mud and the holes, they followed the never-ending Canadian advances as a reserve force, waiting for back-up. Six hundred conscripts arrived. They are all full of good will. They are strong and vivacious young men. But they know nothing of war.

We might have thought there would be a silent hostility between the volunteers and the conscripts. The tragic events that took place in Québec, having resonated all over the world, had touched our prestige and tarnished our glory. But it was not the case. We forgot. We made them understand that it was not only in the interest of France and England that they had been called, but for Canada as well. The world could never have been at peace with the power of German militarism. We needed to crush it, to annihilate it, so that the world could be happily at home, soaking up the sun." (p.141)

8. "More than four years have passed, and during those four years, the 22nd has grown a hundredfold, rising higher than the sublime and preserving the purest of military glories. During those four years, throughout the violence of the battles, it never ceded any ground, never retreated an inch."

After Kemmel, Saint-Éloi, Zillebecke, Ypres, Courcellette, Régina, Angres, Neuville St Waast, Vimy, Lens, Passchendaele, Mercatel, Neuville-Vitasse, Amiens and the Somme, Chilly, Cherisy, Cambrai, Valenciennes and the thundering attacks of the Hainaut province, after the capture of Mons by Canadians troops on November 11, the very day of the armistice, after so much fighting and so many sacrifices done at these historic places, the famous Battalion, uniting its cry of joy with the peaceful hallelujah sung by an entire universe, reached the banks of the Rhine, moved by the noble sentiments of magnanimous victory." (p.146)

9. "We talked about the 22nd a lot. We will always keep on talking about it: its accomplishments are eternal; it is an epic poem from prologue to epilogue, but the marvels written therein will never match the sublimity of their actions." (p.149)

10. "Forward, always forward, we march, guided by the star of impending peace and pushed by an invisible force. In the chaos of the hordes, the confusions and the entangled corpses, among the destroyed lands from which thousands of scattered objects emerge, along the canals swollen by the recent rains, under the breaches slashed by cannon fire, under the wrath of hail, under bursts of fire, under gunfire, we march, leaving behind us our dead and wounded." (p.143-144)

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Activity #4 Worksheet

Continued

Use this worksheet to support the 5Ws exercise in Activity 4 of *Think Like a Historian: The Last Hundred Days* Education Guide.

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WHAT?

What kind of document is it?

WHO?

Who is the author/ creator of the document? What can you infer about the author from the excerpts?

WHEN AND WHERE?

When and where was it written?

WHY?

Why was the document written/ created? Who was the intended audience?

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN: THE LAST HUNDRED DAYS

Use this worksheet to support the Reaching Conclusions exercise in Activity 4 of *Think Like a Historian: The Last Hundred Days* Education Guide.

Based on evidence from Corneloup’s account, develop conclusions about his thoughts, feelings, and values as well as the experiences of French-Canadian soldiers in the 22nd Battalion during the Last Hundred Days.

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	Evidence	Conclusions
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN: THE LAST HUNDRED DAYS

Use this worksheet to support the Finding Proof exercise in Activity 4 of *Think Like a Historian: The Last Hundred Days* Education Guide.

In pairs, compare Corneloup’s account with a letter written by Armand Thérien, a soldier in the 22nd Battalion (below). Identify the similarities and differences in Corneloup’s account of the Last Hundred Days with Thérien’s letter and record them in the chart.



Point of comparison	Similarities	Differences
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

August 26, 1918

At 3 am, we move towards our attack position as indicated by our officers. Following them, we exit the trenches at the gates of Arras, and we move toward a small railroad situated approximately 800 yards north of Arras. We end up about 500 yards from the Germans, and silence is necessary, as the smallest of noises could expose our attack plan. Every so often a German or Allied shell flies over our heads, whistling, trying to hit the other's artillery. All is silent; we are divided by sections... and by wave (of assault): we only hear the short, muffled voice of the Captain giving his orders; then a plane flies over, breaking the silence with the noise of its motor. Not a single gun shot: the fritzts [Germans] are not expecting an offensive.

The Captain hands out the rum. We wait for the signal; ten more minutes. We speak softly, share our thoughts.

An old French-Canadian soldier beside me tells me: "It's your first attack, that's why you are so cheerful; but I've seen many others, I know what it is." And he keeps going: "If you are wounded, throw your gun, your equipment, keep only your metal helmet and your gas mask, and go to the back; but don't get caught in the barrage fire, cause then you're dead." I don't know what it is, but I feel gay, brave; I hate the Germans and I want to kill them all (the effects of the rum).

"2 minutes," says the Captain. "We advance by 100 yards every 4 minutes, in a diagonal to the right." "Cheer up, boys, either we take our objective, or we die."

3 o'clock. A flare. 2 seconds. The barrage fire starts. Terrible bombardment. The Germans hesitate a minute, then start their own barrage fire. It's unbelievable. This is nothing but a beat, a lightning; 4 minutes. We move forward; 10 men fall around me, killed by our own artillery. What is happening? A mistake with the calculations? I don't know. Another type of flare. We are told to keep firing.

We march on. Shells explode all around us, over our heads; the bullets whistle in our ears. Men fall. Fear takes me; I want to be wounded, but I'm afraid of it; I'm scared, because I can't believe what is happening. You have to see it to understand it because it is unspeakable.

We move forward, in pain and suffering, getting stuck in the barbed wire, jumping in shell holes, etc., when (Lieutenant) Gendron, in charge of our wave, gives us the signal to stop because we are moving too fast. We stand by, and then get the signal to keep going. This action takes my fear away; I light myself a cigarette, too, and keep moving, Thérien! ...

... That's where I am buried; a shell explodes five steps from me; I fall on my stomach and faint; and when I come to, my face and arms are exposed, my equipment has been removed and I feel in my neck an excruciating pain; who dug me up? I found out later it was my old friend, killed as he did that for me.

I get up. I'm dizzy. I touch my neck and feel a warmth I think is blood. I can go to the back, I fall; it starts raining again, I walk a few steps, fall in the barbed wire. I don't even know where the front is. I only hear one noise. I only see one light. I finally fall in a shell hole and, despite the noise of the canon, I am so tired that I fall asleep.

I don't know how long I slept. I touch my wound. It's only a bump. It's dawn; it's still raining. I stumble on the dead, I hear the moans of the wounded. I trip on another body. It's my Captain, with a bullet wound in each leg. I dress his wound. He sees the state I'm in and gives me another shot of rum. I see in the distance a group of our support men. I join them, I report to the [Lieutenant]. ...

The [Lieutenant] keeps me with him. We empty the dug-outs, we kill about 30 Germans and take 84 prisoners. A section of my Regiment moves forward, I join them and arrive with them at Monchy; our objective. Nice little village surrounded by trenches...

Armand Thérien

Armand Thérien,
22nd Battalion (French-Canadian)