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INTRODUCTION

The Battle of Vimy Ridge has long been considered a milestone in the formation of Canadian national identity. As Brigadier General Alexander Ross said after the victory, “In those few minutes, I witnessed the birth of a nation”. The centennial year of Vimy Ridge offers an important occasion to learn more about the historical significance of the battle, and reflect on its meaning to Canada’s shared history.

The Vimy 100 History Lens Tool Kit is designed to help educators and students deepen their knowledge and think critically about the Battle of Vimy Ridge on the anniversary of its centennial. Students and teachers are asked to reflect on the importance of Vimy Ridge to Canada’s historical narrative, and what it means to Canada today. This learning tool includes activities to prepare students for their trip to Vimy, to engage students while in France, and to reflect on their visit to Vimy after returning.

Developed in line with the pedagogical concepts created by Dr. Peter Seixas and the Historical Thinking Project, this tool kit complements Canadian middle-school and high-school curricula. This tool kit has been created by **Historica Canada**, the country’s largest organization dedicated to enhancing awareness of Canada’s history. For more information, please visit www.historicacanada.ca.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Heritage Minutes

- Nursing Sisters
- Valour Road
- John McCrae
- Vimy Ridge

Other Resources

- Historical Thinking Project
- Dictionary of Canadian Biography
- The Memory Project
- The Cenotaph Project

The Canadian Encyclopedia: Research Resources

- First World War Collection

Coming soon:

What can photographs, personal letters, and newspapers tell us about the past? Learn to *Think Like a Historian* with our new video series! Taking students and educators ‘behind the scenes’ into the process of doing history, this bilingual 3-part video series investigates primary sources from the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Accompanied by classroom worksheets to support student learning, this resource opens a new window to explore the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Follow @HistoricaCanada on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram to be notified about the launch!



PRE-TOUR IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Activity 1.1 Historical Perspective-Taking: Creating a Heritage Minute

The Heritage Minutes are 60-second vignettes that depict a significant person, story or event in Canadian history. As a class, watch the Heritage Minutes related to the First World War: “Nursing Sisters”, “Valour Road”, “John McCrae”, and “Vimy Ridge”.

1. In pairs or small groups, choose one of the Minutes you watched as a class. Write a short summary of the Minute, including plot, characters, setting, and perspective.
2. Conduct research on the topic of your selected Minute, e.g., women’s roles during the First World War for the Nursing Sisters Minute.
3. Using the evidence gathered, reimagine another version of the Minute from the perspective of a different character. How would you write this Minute from a different perspective? How might that change the story being told?
4. To present your findings, work with your group to write a script for the new Minute or create a storyboard, either by hand or using online software.



Still from the “Nursing Sisters” Heritage Minute.

Activity 1.2 Primary Sources: Writing a Historic Plaque

The Memory Project Archive draws together the stories of Canadian Veterans from the First World War (and throughout the twentieth century), some of whom were at the Battle of Vimy Ridge. These stories include letters, photographs and oral histories that provide insight into the personal experiences of war.

- Choose one of the Veteran Stories from the list below to be featured on a new historic plaque.
- Read or listen to their story, making notes on key details about who they were and their experience at Vimy.
- Identify the type of sources available (personal letters, photos, oral history, second-hand accounts, etc). What are the benefits and limitations to the sources available?
- Write the text for a short (1/2 page) historical plaque dedicated to your chosen Veteran, including the most important information you can uncover from their story.
- Include a short summary of the sources you used and identify any gaps in information.
- Include two to three sentences explaining where your plaque would be physically located and why.

Veteran Stories:

1. Robert John Clayton
2. George Leslie Scherer
3. Francis Bathe

Extension Activity:

Create a design to showcase your text, which can be featured in a classroom display.



Optional: Use the Library and Archives of Canada Military Records to expand your research. Review the Cenotaph Project Learning Tool at Canada-War.ca for more information.



Activity 1.3 Historical Significance: Here's My Canada Brainstorm

As a class, have a brainstorming discussion about the importance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge to Canadian identity.

1. As a class, use the following questions as starting points:
 - How important was Vimy to the course of the war?
 - How important do you think it is to Canadian identity today?
 - Are there other places, or moments that you think are more important to Canada's national identity and history?
2. Following the class discussion, write a personal reflection about the historical significance of Vimy Ridge in the format of a script that would take about 30 seconds to read. Film your 30-second video on site in France. You can use your footage and script to enter the Here's My Canada video contest.

ON-TOUR ACTIVITIES

Activity 2.1 Daily Reflections

Throughout the trip, keep a daily journal of your itinerary and personal reflections, which can include thoughts and feelings about the trip and your experiences. Consider the following questions in your reflections:

- What does it mean to you to be at Vimy Ridge?
- How might a veteran of the Battle of Vimy Ridge have felt returning to the site and seeing the memorial?
- What do you think this event means for Canada, and to Canadian history?
- What sights, noises, tastes and smells might soldiers have experienced during the battle?

Activity 2.2 Remembrance: Drawing and Writing

Drawing and writing help enhance our memories. Take some time at the Vimy memorial to create a sketch or take notes on your impressions. You don't need to be an artist or a writer – this is about your personal perspective on the memorial and how you want to remember it. Alternatively, you can create a piece of creative writing taking the memorial as the subject (e.g., a poem or a song).

Consider the following questions in your reflection on remembrance:

- What features of the memorial stand out to you?
- What was your first impression of the memorial? As you examined it more closely, did that impression change?
- Is there a detail or symbol that you think is particularly meaningful? Why?
- How important is symbolism in the Vimy memorial?
- How does the memorial make you feel? Do you think this was the goal of the memorial?



*An point, en France,
28 mars 1917.*

Activity 2.3 Writing a Letter Home

Write a diary entry or a letter home from the perspective of the veteran you researched before the trip (see activity 1.2). Imagine how this soldier may have felt at the Battle of Vimy Ridge, and what they might have revealed or held back from family or friends at home. In writing your entry or letter, consider the following questions:

- What information might have been included and why?
- What information might have been left out, or censored?

Include a short statement addressing these questions with your letter.

Letter from Olivar Asselin to Jean Asselin, 28 March 1917 (courtesy Archives de Montréal, P104-1)

Activity 2.4 Here's My Canada Video Contest

To prepare for filming your 30-second video for the **Here's My Canada contest**, choose one of the following questions and write a short reflection about it in your journal:

- What other important historical events or figures have shaped the Canada we know today? Explain how these events or individuals have contributed to Canada's development.
- How does Vimy Ridge make you feel about being Canadian? What part does Vimy Ridge play in your identity as a Canadian?
- How do you think new Canadians feel about Vimy Ridge? Does that history apply to all Canadian identities?

Looking to the past is an important step toward building the future. 2017 is the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, but it is also the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation. Think about the lessons that you have learned during your trip to Vimy Ridge and reflect on your vision for Canada's present and future. What do you hope the next 150 years looks like?

- What does multiculturalism mean to you as a person living in Canada?
- What important historical events or figures have shaped the Canada we know today? Explain how these events or individuals have contributed to Canada's development.
- What more can be done to ensure Canada is a safe space to people who identify as minorities such as LGBTQ, visible minorities, etc.?
- Canada has a diverse landscape. Explain this diversity and what it means to you. Do you consider this landscape an important part of your identity as a person living in Canada? Why?
- What rights and privileges do you enjoy as someone living in Canada? Explain these and/or note what other strides Canada can work on to be a better country.



POST-TOUR IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Activity 3.1 Historical Significance: The Birth of a Nation?

The significance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge to the First World War and Canadian identity has been a subject of debate among historians. Imagine that you have been asked to weigh in on this debate over the historical significance of Vimy Ridge. Write a letter to the editor of a local or national newspaper, responding to this statement: the Battle of Vimy Ridge is a defining moment in our nation's history. Do you believe this to be true? Why, or why not? Provide supporting evidence from your pre-tour research combined with observations and examples from your on-tour daily reflections.

Activity 3.2 Ethical Dimension: Creating a Museum Exhibit¹

How should we remember Vimy Ridge? As we study the First World War, we must consider the ethics of how we remember the war and its legacy. Can we present history from an unbiased perspective? Can we show different perspectives without stigmatizing? What do we owe to the people of the past? And how should we respond to past wrongs?

1. Working in small groups, research and plan a virtual museum exhibit on the legacy of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.
2. Begin by brainstorming with your group. Take notes on your planning. Think about what makes a powerful exhibit. How can a museum exhibit move us, make us think, or successfully preserve a memory? What understanding do you want visitors to walk away with? Is there an overall message? How can memorials work to prevent injustices from occurring in the future? How does understanding the past create a way forward?
3. Now begin your research. Discuss with your group members what features you would like your exhibit to have. As part of your research, look online for exhibits that museums or memorials have created for similar events. Use your research to help you answer the following question: What story do you want your exhibit to tell? Visit The Canadian Encyclopedia and do some research on the history and legacy of the First World War.

Consider the following questions in creating your virtual exhibit:

- Who are the main historical figures to be included?
- On what aspect of the Battle of Vimy Ridge will you focus?
- Who would you consult in the creation of this exhibit (e.g. academics, veterans, teachers, etc.)?
- Which voices and perspectives would you include in your exhibit? How would you include them?

EXTENSION: Alternatively, create a memorial using another form of communication including art or literature.

¹This activity has been adapted from the Historica Canada Residential Schools Education Guide. Find this Guide and more learning resources at: education.historicacanada.ca

