





PERSPECTIVES, CONNECTIONS, REFLECTIONS: CANADA AND THE WORLD WARS

**EDUCATION GUIDE** 

### INTRODUCTION

Studying the historical significance of Canada's involvement in the two world wars offers students and educators alike the opportunity to think critically about the defining moments of our own nation's history. Travelling abroad allows the cities, landmarks, and cultures of distant communities to become tangible — giving young people a richer understanding of historic events and how they have shaped Canadian identity.

This toolkit was created by **Historica Canada** in partnership with **EF Educational Tours**. Using primary sources and oral histories, students and teachers are asked to consider the role Canadians played in the world wars through a variety of perspectives, including those frequently overlooked by history books.

The toolkit prepares travellers for their educational tours and supplies context for what they will see and experience. On the tour, students will engage with their surroundings and deepen their connection to Canadian history, which should continue to have an impact when they return home. Students can continue to reflect on their experiences, think critically, and develop new perspectives on the world and their place in it.

EF Educational Tours is a world leader in educational travel, helping educators enhance the value of classroom lessons through meaningful travel experiences. Historica Canada offers programs that you can use to explore, learn, and reflect on our history and what it means to be Canadian. Together, we bring history to life, giving students a new way of understanding our past, present, and future.

#### Online Resources

Use the following list of bilingual resources to support the activities in this guide.

The Canadian Encyclopedia: thecanadianencyclopedia.ca

Historica Canada Education Portal: education.historicacanada.ca

The Memory Project: thememoryproject.com

The Heritage Minutes: historicacanada.ca/heritageminutes

Dictionary of Canadian Biography: biographi.ca

Francis Godon (on right) with two of his friends at Shilo, Manitoba, just before going overseas, 1943 (courtesy Francis Godon/The Memory Project).



## **PRE-TOUR ACTIVITIES**

### Three-Part Historical Character Perspective (Profile, Letter, and Reflective Journal)

Exploring primary sources and oral histories fosters a better understanding of those who lived during a specific time period. Examining sources from the world wars offers a glimpse into the experiences and emotions of those who lived through them.

You will be asked to follow one person from the list on the following page before, during, and after your trip. You will take on the persona of this historical character and complete assignments from their perspective. This is a three-part activity meant to encourage you to think about your character at different points on your journey.

In *Part One: Before the Trip*, you will create a character profile to get an idea of who your character was. *Part Two: On the Trip* asks you to write a letter home as your character; you will detail a specific battle your character experienced. In *Part Three: After the Trip*, you will compose a reflective journal entry as your character, explaining how their life might have changed since the war.

Use the information provided in The Memory Project testimonies as a starting point to get an idea about who they were. Where information lacks, improvise and fill the gaps with your own ideas. Be creative!

### Explore these stories on The Memory Project's online archive at www.thememoryproject.com/stories.

#### **First World War**

- Ida Ferguson: First World War nurse and recipient of the Croix de Guerre who served with a surgical team in France.
- Cyril L.C. Allinson: Served with the Canadian Field Artillery and was present when John McCrae wrote In Flanders Fields.
- Francis Bathe: Soldier who fought at the battle of Vimy Ridge.
- George Leslie Scherer: Soldier who fought at the Battle of Vimy Ridge.
- Charles James McNeil Willoughby: Served with the British Medical Corps.

#### **Second World War**

- Howard Sinclair Anderson: Indigenous soldier who served with the Canadian Army.
- Francis William Godon: Soldier who landed at Juno Beach.
- Kenneth Daynard: Soldier who participated in the D-Day invasion.
- *lan Mair*: Served with the Navy during the D-Day invasion.
- Ruth Muggeridge: Nurse who served in a burn ward in England, and in Belgium and the Netherlands.
- Bertha Annie Hull: Served as a nursing sister in England and tended to soldiers wounded on D-Day.



Nursing Sisters at the first Mess dinner, No. 9 Canadian General Hospital, Horsham, England, March 24, 1944 (courtesy Bertha Hull/The Memory Project).

## **Activity 1.1 Character Profile**

- 1. Begin by reading or listening to each source from the list above. Choose one historical character that interests you.
- 2. Create a character profile based on your character. Include all the information you can gather: who are they, who is their family, what is their rank and military branch (Navy, Army, Air Force), when were they born, where are they from, why did they join up, how do they feel about going to war?
  - a) What thoughts and emotions are conveyed in their story?
  - b) What kind of language is used? Is there anything you don't understand and need to explore as you prepare to write in this character's voice?
  - c) Is there any additional background information you would like to use for the profile?
- 3. Prepare for *Part Two: On the Trip* by thinking about what battlefields you will be visiting. Make sure to note which site your character has a relationship to. When you arrive at the site, you will be asked to write a letter home from your character's perspective.



### **Activity 1.2 Historical Significance**

In small groups (or individually in small classes), research one historical event or site you will explore on your trip, such as Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele, Essex Farms, Ypres, Juno Beach, Arromanches, or Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery. Select a leader to represent each group.

- 1. In your groups, prepare a short presentation that will be given to the class by the leader.
  - Discuss the following questions to help with the presentation:
    - How important was this site or event within the larger context of the war?
    - How significant do you think it is to Canadian history?
    - Why is it important to reflect on what took place at this site?
- 2. Take notes while each group leader presents their topic.
- 3. Following the presentations, use the information gathered to write a short news report about the historical significance of one of the events discussed. The report should take about 30 seconds to read. Record your 30-second video at the site on your trip.



Tommy Prince









For a complete list of sites visited,

find your trip itinerary here.

Explore these stories on The Canadian Encyclopedia.

## **Activity 1.3 Indigenous Perspectives: Historical Plaques**

During the First and Second World War, thousands of Indigenous people served in the Canadian military, and most Indigenous communities participated in war efforts on the home front. However, Indigenous experiences of the world wars — both at home and overseas — varied greatly. Although many who served were respected and accepted by the Armed Forces, other Indigenous individuals and groups faced discrimination and unequal treatment, both during the wars and after. The following activity asks you to compare and reflect on these experiences.

- 1. Choose one of the people in the images above to feature on a new historical plaque.
- 2. Read their article on *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, making notes on key details about their experience during the war.
- 3. Do further research on your chosen figure, using a variety of sources to find information.
- 4. Write half a page of text for the historical plaque, including the most important information you can uncover from your research. What makes them historically significant? Why? Separately, include a short summary of the sources you used and identify any gaps in the information.
- 5. Include two to three sentences explaining where the plaque should be located and why.



### **Activity 1.4 Women's History During the Wars: Museum Panels**

Museums are windows into the past. Many museum exhibits share history in a way that emphasizes the experiences and roles of men, distorting our perception of history. Imagine your class is responsible for a new exhibit that highlights the experiences of a diverse range of women who contributed to the war effort. Create a collaborative museum exhibit exploring the significance of women and girls' contributions to Canada during the wars.

- 1. Working as a pair or small group, choose a woman or group of women from the lists below to research.
- 2. Note your findings in the Museum Panel Graphic Organizer, available on the Education Portal.
- 3. Begin your research on *The Canadian Encyclopedia* or the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, and use other sources.
- 4. Assess the importance of the woman or women you researched. Justify their inclusion in a museum exhibit.
- 5. Create a descriptive museum panel on a poster or digital platform, including the following:
  - a. A brief description of the woman or group of women
  - b. An explanation of what they reveal about life at the time
  - c. An argument about their significance in Canada's history
- d. Images that illustrate your perspective, if available6. Present the panel to the class, and together create a collaborative museum gallery.

Signal officers of the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service (W.R.C.N.S.), Halifax, NS, October 1943 (Lt. Gilbert A. Milne/Canada Dept. of National Defence/Library and Archives Canada/PA-142460).











#### Resources

Dimock/The Memory Project).

### **The Memory Project Veterans Stories:**

Tyne Cot Commonwealth Cemetery in Belgium (Dreamstime/Chris Dorney/138572494).

- Nurses during the First World War, such as <u>Gwendolyn Powys MacNeil</u>.
- Codebreakers at Bletchley Park during the Second World War, such as <u>Margaret Cooper</u>.



# **ON-TOUR ACTIVITIES**

This section comprises activities for students to complete while they are on their trip. These activities will require students to engage with their surroundings and reflect on their impressions of the sites they visit.

### **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 this site?
- How might a veteran feel returning to this site? What would they notice has changed?
- What do you think this site means for Canadians, and to Canadian history?
- What sights, noises, tastes, and smells might soldiers have experienced at this site?

### **Activity 2.2 Three-Part Historical Character Perspective: Writing a Letter Home**

This is part two of the three-part activity. Write a letter home from the perspective of the historical character you profiled before the trip in Activity 1.1. Imagine how this person felt during wartime and what they might have revealed or held back from family or friends at home. Your letter should reflect your character's experience during the specific event they participated in. You should complete this activity during or directly following your visit to the site. For example, if your character fought on D-Day, wait for the Normandy visit to write the letter.

In writing your 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 2.3 Remembrance: Drawing or Photo Journal**

Visual representations enhance our memories. Take some time at a site of your choosing to create a sketch or a photo journal. Using the drawings or images, create a memorial of a site of your choice. You don't need to be an artist or an accomplished photographer — this is your personal perspective on the site and how you want to remember it.

olessement. Fort autous & mir il ya bo off

interesses enene

Consider the following questions in your reflection on remembrance:

- What features of the site stand out to you?
- What was your first impression of the site? As you examined it more closely, did that impression change?
- Is there a detail or symbol that you think is particularly meaningful?
  Why?
- What symbols stand out as important to Canadian identity?



## **POST-TOUR ACTIVITIES**

### **Activity 3.1 Three-Part Historical Character Perspective: Reflective Journal**

This is the third and last part of our three-part activity. Create a reflective journal exploring your character's journey during and after the war. Students should consider the way Canada's involvement in the war is remembered through the experiences of their characters. If possible, add photos or memorabilia from your trip to your journal. Try to answer the following questions in your journal:

- What difficulties might your character have experienced coming home after the war?
- How did the events influence your character's relationship with Canada/Canadian identity?
- How did your character feel upon coming back home?
- How has your character's perspective of the war changed?
- What future challenges might your character face?

Upon completion, share your character's experience with your classmates. In small groups, compare and contrast how different characters may have felt about the end of the war depending on their identities and backgrounds. Reflect on the perspectives and experiences of your characters and on how their personal memories may differ from the national memory.

### **Activity 3.2 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. 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.

**Extension:** As a class, explore the ways that other events (D-Day, VE Day, etc.) also influenced Canadian identity. How do they compare with the narrative around Vimy Ridge in discussions of Canadian identity?



### Activity 3.3 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 Heritage Minutes related to the world wars: "Nursing Sisters," "Valour Road," "Andrew Mynarski," "John McCrae," "Juno Beach," and "Mona Parsons."

- 1. In pairs or small groups, choose one of the Minutes you watched as a class. Write a short summary, including the 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.



**Historica Canada** and **EF Educational Tours** are committed to a shared goal of building awareness of and connection to Canadian history. Through our partnership, we seek to help students and educators deepen their knowledge and think critically about Canadian identity.

**EF's Historic Event Tours** are designed to foster a rich understanding of our history and help students develop a connection to the past through active participation and meaningful reflection. By exploring significant sites, visiting the graves of Canadian soldiers, or taking part in official commemorative ceremonies, students acquire new perspectives on history, and their place in it.

For more information about EF Educational Tours' upcoming Historic Event Tours, click <u>here</u>. For more classroom resources from Historica Canada, access our <u>Education Portal</u>.