

Lesson Plan



Title: The Battlefield Landscape of the First World War

Author: Connie Wyatt Anderson, 2014 recipient of the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Article title + Magazine Issue: "Fighting for Freedom" by Stephen Sharpino on p.8 to p.13 in the 2016 Remembrance Day digital issue of *Kayak: Canada's History Magazine for Kids*.

Grade Level: Elementary (4-6)

Subject Area: Social Studies

Theme(s):

- War and the Canadian Experience
- Peace & Conflict

Lesson Overview:

In this lesson students explore several seminal Canadian First World War battles with an emphasis on the experiences of soldiers in the trenches.

Time Required: 1 – 2 lessons

Historical Thinking Concept(s):

- Use primary source evidence
- Take historical perspectives

Learning Outcomes:

Student will:

- Recognize the physical landscape for Canadian soldiers in the trenches of the First World War.
- Distinguish the similarities and differences for Canadians in the battles of Ypres, The Somme, Vimy Ridge, and Passchendaele.
- Compose a letter taking the historical perspective of a Canadian soldier at the battle of Passchendaele.

Background Information:

Historical topics covered: The First World War, trench warfare, battles of Ypres, The Somme, Vimy Ridge, and Passchendaele.

The Lesson Activity:

Activating: *How will students be prepared for learning?*

- Divide the class into groups of three or four; distribute the 2016 electronic Remembrance Day issue of *Kayak: Canadians History Magazine for Kids* as a print out, on a laptop or other electronic device
- Draw the students' attention to the First World War battles on pages 10 and 11: Ypres, The Somme, Vimy Ridge, and Passchendaele
- Assign each group a battle to read about; give them several minutes to read and discuss in their groups
- Check for understanding by asking: Describe what you see in the photographs

[soldiers wearing gas masks, muddy trenches, soldiers looking down a ridge; shell hole, etc.]

Acquiring: *What strategies facilitate learning for groups and individuals?*

- On the whiteboard write the names of the four battles as column headlines; note the month/year of the battle.

Ypres/April 1915	The Somme/July 1916	Vimy/April 1917	Passchendaele/October 1917

- Hold up the battle descriptor cards one at a time. Explain that these words describe the battlefield experience.
- Ask: based on your readings, where best does this card fit?
- Affix the card under the column the students chose
- Ask: do you think these words apply to the First World War battle experiences as a whole? What do you think life was like in the trenches for Canadian soldiers?
- Draw the student's attention to the column marked "Passchendaele." Read the battle descriptor cards in that column [TRENCHES, MUD, RAIN]
- Read aloud the Passchendaele section on page 11.
- Ask: What conditions made the battlefield at Passchendaele a horrible morass for Canadian soldiers? Consider: Date [1917 – the war had been going on for three years]; Month [October brought incessant rains and cold].
- Ask again: What do you think life was like in the trenches for Canadian soldiers?

Applying: *How will students demonstrate their understanding?*

- Instruct students to take the perspective of a Canadian soldier in the First World War and write a letter home to a friend of relative describing their experiences in the trenches on the Western Front.

Materials/Resources:

- Battle descriptor cards: on several large pieces of paper write these words: POISONOUS GAS, BARBED WIRE, ARTILLERY SHELL FIRE, UNDERGROUND TUNNELS, TRENCHES, MUD, and RAIN.
- Several copies of the 2016 Remembrance Day digital issue of *Kayak: Canada's History Magazine for Kids*.

Extension Activity:

- Post the students' letter as part of a class bulletin board display alongside photographic images of First World trenches.