



Canadian troops returning from the trenches, November 1916.

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WORLD WAR I

*On August 4, 1914, Britain declared war.
 Canada was instantly involved.*

When WWI began in August 1914, many believed that it would be over by Christmas of that year. That was not to be, however; it lasted for more than four years, until the official Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918.

The Great War broke out against a background of rivalry between the world's great powers, including, Britain, Germany, France, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and the Ottoman Empire. The race to build bigger and more powerful military forces, escalating disputes over trade and land, dissatisfaction with the balance of power in Europe and resentment over past grievances all led to growing tensions throughout Europe.

More than 65 million soldiers from 30 countries fought in WWI. Nearly 10 million of them died. Thousands of soldiers were left disabled or disfigured.

This World War I resource was originally produced for students and teachers in recognition of the 100-year anniversary of WWI in August 2014. It has been updated for use in 2020. This program will give you the opportunity to learn more about the Great War and Canada's contribution to the Allied efforts.

So many young men and women went off to war far away from home. Sadly, many of them did not return. Many others, lucky enough to come back, remained forever scarred, both physically and emotionally.

By reading this special section and completing the activities associated with it, we hope that as you celebrate Remembrance Day on November 11, you do so with a new appreciation for the 619,636 Canadians who served in this war. They have given us much to be thankful for.



Watch for this special WWI education resource from Toronto Star Classroom Connection. Runs November 2 - 5.

Thanks to Veterans Affairs Canada for supporting this education resource through their Commemorative Partnership Program.

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Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg

It all began with an assassination

On June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand – heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne – and his wife, Sophie, were shot and killed by Gavrilo Princip, on a Sarajevo street. The assassination was the catalyst that set off a chain of events that led to war in August of 1914.

A Serbian terrorist group, called The Black Hand, had carried out the assassination. The Black Hand wanted to increase Serbian power in the Balkans by breaking up the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In response, Austria-Hungary declared war and attacked Serbia on July 28, 1914.

Germany supported Austria-Hungary, and Russia sided with Serbia. Germany then invaded France, which was Russia's main ally.

On August 3, German troops moved on France by invading Belgium -- a country that had been neutral for 75 years, ever since 1839 when all the European powers signed the Treaty of London promising they would guard Belgium's neutrality if it were ever invaded. Britain fulfilled its obligations and declared war the next day. On August 4, 1914, Canada, as a member of the British Empire, was at war.

620,000
 CANADIANS ENLISTED

424,000
 SERVED OVERSEAS

172,000
 WOUNDED

61,000
 KILLED



Countries that fought in the Great War

The war began in Europe and soon spread throughout most of the world.

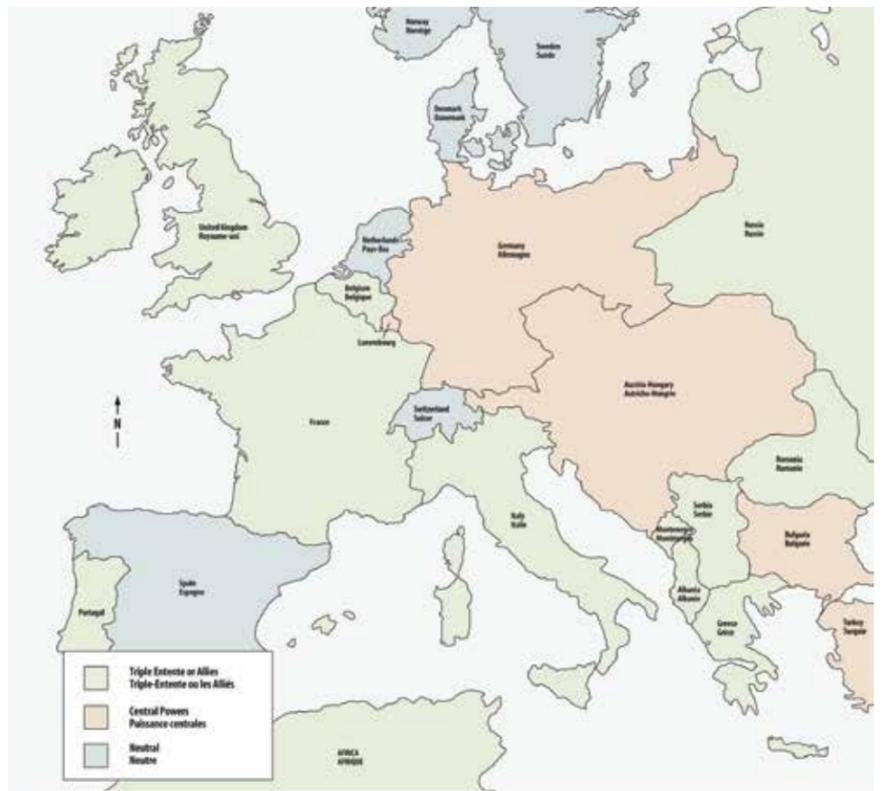
Many countries fought during the war. Complicated military alliances and treaties that existed among the European powers divided much of Europe. The consequence of these alliances and treaties usually meant that if one country went to war, its allies would likely follow.

The two opposing forces in Europe were: the Central Powers and the Triple Entente (or Allies). The Central Powers consisted of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire (Turkey). The Allies included Great Britain, France, and Russia.

Other countries joined one side or the other, depending on which they thought would benefit them the most. The Central Powers were joined by Bulgaria. The Allies were joined by Italy, Japan, Greece, Portugal, and Romania. In 1917, the United States entered the war on the side of the Allies. Dominions and colonies contributed soldiers to their mother countries.

CHECK IT OUT

Go online to research which countries remained neutral throughout the War and why.



Europe before the First World War. www.warmuseum.ca © CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

Robert Borden

Canada's prime minister during WWI

Sir Robert Borden was Canada's prime minister from 1911 to 1920. Robert Borden led the country through a difficult period in Canadian history. He made a significant contribution to the war effort while managing political struggles at home.

At the beginning of the war, Canada had little control over its military forces and its foreign policy, and had no experience with managing a country during wartime.

Borden used the importance of Canada's growing war effort to push for greater national autonomy for Canada within the British Empire.



He believed strongly in the necessity of a large-scale military and industrial contribution to the war effort. In May of 1917, Borden returned from a visit to Britain and the battlefield in France convinced that Canada must make every effort to maintain its forces overseas. However, voluntary recruitment was failing to maintain Canadian troop numbers. Borden retired from politics in 1920 and died in 1937.

The Military Service Act

In 1917, the Military Service Act was passed – making all single male citizens between the ages of 20 and 45 subject to military service, if called, for the duration of the war.

The conscription (or compulsory service) debate nearly tore Canada apart. French Canadians, as well as many farmers, unionized workers, non-British immigrants, and other Canadians were generally opposed to conscription. English-speaking Canadians, led by Prime Minister Robert Borden, members of his Cabinet, as well as British immigrants, the families of soldiers, and older Canadians generally supported it.

Borden won the fall election amid controversy and fierce recriminations, convincing many Liberals to support his

Union government by making the conscription issue a test of loyalty to King and country.

Borden improved his chances for victory with the War-



Wartime recruiting poster for the 207th Battalion of Ottawa-Carleton. © CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

time Elections Act that gave the vote to the wives, mothers, and sisters of soldiers, the first women permitted to vote in

Canadian federal elections. These groups tended to favour conscription because it supported their men in the field.

The act denied the vote to recent immigrants from enemy countries ("enemy aliens"), unless they had a family member in military service. At the same time, the Military Voters Act extended the vote to all military personnel and nurses, including women, regardless of their period of residence in Canada.

In the end, conscription had little impact on Canada's war effort. When the war ended in November 1918, only 48,000 conscripts had been sent overseas, half of whom ultimately served at the front. More than 50,000 more conscripts were not required and remained in Canada.

Influential Canadians of WWI



John McCrae

Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae was a Canadian physician and soldier during World War I. He served as a surgeon during the Battle of Ypres. McCrae, at age 42, was older than many of his comrades, and had already fought with the Canadian Artillery during the Second Boer War in South Africa.

The day before McCrae wrote his famous poem, *In Flanders Fields*, one of his closest friends died in battle and was buried in a makeshift grave marked by a wooden cross. Wild poppies marked many graves. John McCrae, through his poem, honoured his friend and others who died.

The poem is associated with Remembrance Day for Canadians and much of the rest of the world.



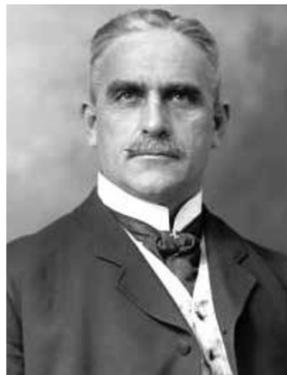
Francis Pegahmagabow

Francis Pegahmagabow – the most decorated First Nations soldier to serve in the Canadian military in World War I—was an Ojibwe from the Parry Island band, today known as the Wasauksing First Nation, based near Parry Sound.

While details of his childhood are murky, he said he was an orphan. On his military attestation paper, in the space reserved for next of kin, he wrote "none."

The 23-year-old marine firefighter with the fisheries department enlisted with the 23rd Regiment, known as the Northern Pioneers, in the opening days of the First World War, but was soon transferred to the 1st Canadian Infantry Battalion. He was one of nearly 4,000 aboriginal Canadians who served in the war.

Records suggest that, for the most part, the racism they had faced at home seemed to be absent in the trenches.



Sir Sam Hughes

Sir Sam Hughes believed in the everyman, and when war was declared in 1914, the Minister of Militia and Defense was in charge of organizing a military base north of Quebec City where 30,000 men began their transformation into soldiers.

He couldn't stay away from Valcartier. He blustered around the base, demoting and promoting at will, marvelling at the "fine lot of boys" in his presence. Hughes resigned from his ministerial position in 1916, and as a backbencher MP after the war he famously criticized Sir Gen. Arthur Currie for his decisions in the war's final days.

He is remembered as erratic, bombastic, vainglorious, a supporter of the flawed Ross Rifle – but Valcartier, a base created in weeks, was one of his greatest achievements.



Billy Bishop

"Billy" Bishop was one of the war's leading aces and most decorated Canadians. Bishop was credited with shooting down 72 planes during the war.

He received the Victoria Cross for his solo attack on four German aircraft on June 2, 1917. During this single raid, he downed three enemy planes and caused another to retreat.

A fellow pilot described Bishop as "a fantastic shot but a terrible pilot."

DID YOU KNOW?

During World War I, dogs were used to carry messages in capsules attached to their bodies.



Thomas 'Tommy' Ricketts

"Tommy" Ricketts was a 17-year-old-Newfoundland private in the 1st Battalion, Royal Newfoundland Regiment. He received the Victoria Cross, the most prestigious award for gallantry in the face of the enemy, awarded to British and Commonwealth forces.

After the war, Ricketts studied pharmacy, and opened a business in St. John's. He was given a state funeral when he died in 1967, and is commemorated by a memorial on the former site of his pharmacy.

Ricketts is sometimes erroneously considered a Canadian soldier. Newfoundland was a self-governing dominion during the war and did not become a Canadian province until 1949.

CONTINUED IN THE NOVEMBER 3 EDITION.

Battlefields

Ypres, Vimy Ridge, The Somme, Passchendaele

Soldiers serving on the Western Front fought mostly in trenches that were, for the most part, filthy. Battles were often fought on terrain that was formerly rich farmland. These fields, when saturated with rain and churned up by shell-fire, became a mass of mud, rotting corpses and human waste. Rats and lice tormented the troops. Many battles were fought under these horrific conditions.

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A Canadian soldier in a front line trench, September 1916.

YPRES

By mid-April 1915, the Germans occupied most of Belgium, and the small portion remaining out of German hands had symbolic importance for the Allies. The area around Ypres had been relatively quiet, so Canadian, French, and British divisions set to work to strengthen their trenches.

The Germans – wearing gas masks – launched a surprise attack in the late afternoon of April 22. During this attack a cloud of yellow-green chlorine gas was released toward the French lines.

The French North African troops – stunned by this first major use of gas in warfare – fled, leaving a gap of six kilometres in the Allied line. The Canadians, their left side now open, struggled to hold their positions, though the gas attack had not hit them.

On April 24, the enemy launched another chlorine gas attack supported by heavy artillery at the two Canadian brigades holding the line. A Canadian officer with a scientific background identified the gas as chlorine and urged men to moisten their handkerchiefs with urine if necessary, and hold

them to their noses. The urine was supposed to help counteract the gas. The soldiers struggled to fire and reload their Ross rifles while others, foaming at the mouth, their lungs destroyed, fell to the ground. However, the Canadians managed to hold on to most of their positions.

Maj. Herbert Wickens, a 31-year-old soldier noted in a letter home that two companies from the 3rd Battalion “put up a magnificent fight. They drove off the Germans time and time again though they kept coming in hordes, but at last were cut off and surrounded.” The two companies, Wickens observed,

were from the Queen’s Own Rifles and the Governor General’s Body Guard. Fewer than half the men of Wickens’ Battalion survived the six days of fighting. The enemy had made gains, but it had not broken through despite the deployment of a new and dreadful weapon.

Just over 6,000 Canadian soldiers were killed, wounded or taken prisoner in the fighting in the Ypres Salient.

Maj. Wickens summed up the result of the battle: “the part that the Canadians took at Ypres was a splendid thing, and, though it was terribly costly, was most important in holding the Germans

in check, and they went through what it hardly seemed possible flesh and blood could stand.”

Ypres remained in Allied hands and was the scene of repeated battles into 1918.

DID YOU KNOW?

Canada’s famous black bear cub mascot, named Winnipeg, travelled overseas. Soldiers placed ‘Winnie’ in the London Zoo, rather than subject it to the rigours of the front. The bear became the inspiration for A.A. Milne’s Winnie-the-Pooh.



Richard Jack
The Taking of Vimy Ridge,
Easter Monday 1917

CWM 19710261-0160
BEAVERBROOK COLLECTION
OF WAR ART
© CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM.

VIMY RIDGE

The Germans occupied Vimy Ridge, a seven-kilometre-long area near Arras, in northern France. The geography offered a commanding view over the surrounding countryside, making it easy for the Germans to defend the Ridge against advancing forces. Previous British and French attacks on the Ridge had been unsuccessful and had resulted in more than 150,000 casualties.

In early 1917, the Canadian Corps under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir Julian Byng was tasked with capturing Vimy Ridge as part of a larger offensive in the Arras area.

Lessons learned in the previous battles led Byng to subject Canadian troops to intense training using new tactics to better prepare soldiers to help them to make quick decisions on their own that were still in keeping with the overall plan. Small units

and individual soldiers were given much more information about the battle, and were expected to exercise initiative in keeping the advance moving, even if their officers were killed or wounded.

Byng’s plan of attack was meticulously prepared. Infantry rehearsed their roles on mock-ups behind the lines; light rail lines were built to carry supplies forward and the wounded back; tunnels under the ridge were carved out to lay mines or to shelter

troops from hostile gunfire.

At daybreak on April 9, 1917, Easter Monday, nearly 1,000 guns opened fire on the German positions. An estimated 15,000 Canadians advanced towards the ridge in the first wave, with thousands more behind them. Amid intense fighting, the Canadians captured most of the ridge that day and the remaining portions of it three days later.

Over four days of bloody fighting, the Canadians took Vimy

Ridge at the cost of more than 10,600 men killed or wounded.

The battle of Vimy Ridge is an important symbol for Canada as the place where Canadians from across the country delivered an unprecedented victory. Vimy Ridge represents the first time in the war that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps fought together.

THE SOMME

The Battle of the Somme was fought from July 1 to November 18, 1916. The Allied forces sought to relieve pressure on the French defenders of Verdun to the south by inflicting heavy losses on German forces farther north and drawing German reserves into the battle.

The joint Allied offensive called for French forces to

play a prominent role, but heavy French casualties at Verdun reduced their ability to participate. British and other Allied forces, under the command of Sir Douglas Haig, assumed responsibility for most of the front.

The German defenders along the Somme had constructed deep trenches that were difficult to find and to destroy with artillery fire.

British troops attacked on July 1, 1916, expecting little resistance following their own heavy artillery barrage. They were met instead by great fire from rifles, artillery, and machine guns. There were nearly 60,000 casualties on the first day of the Somme battle.

Canadian infantry units did not participate in this attack. However, at Beaumont

Hamel, the 1st Newfoundland Regiment, attached to a British division, was cut down on July 1 by German machine-gun fire as it attacked over open ground. Within 30 minutes, the regiment saw 324 killed and 386 wounded out of a total of 801 soldiers.

The first day of the Somme was a catastrophe for the British Army and a shock for all the

Allies. German forces also suffered heavy casualties. The British pressed the attack for months, well into the fall. By the time the battle ended, each side had suffered more than 600,000 casualties.

More British men were killed in this battle than the U.S. lost from all of its armed forces and the National Guard combined.

PASSCHENDAELE

The Passchendaele offensive was launched on July 31, 1917. The British strategy in Flanders was to drive the Germans away from Channel ports and to eliminate German U-boat bases on the coast. Heavy rain and shellfire reduced the battlefield to a vast bog. The fight was not going well for the British troops. Passchendaele ridge was still held by German troops.

When the Canadian Corps – about 100,000 strong – arrived in Flanders in mid-October to relieve Australian and New Zealand troops, they were shocked by the terrible battlefield conditions. General Sir Arthur Currie ordered construction of new roads, improvement of gun pits, and the repair and extension of light railways. Horses and mules transported hundreds of thousands of shells to the front to prepare for the artillery barrage that would prepare for the infantry's attack. The Germans,

holding the high ground atop Passchendaele ridge fired continuously on these efforts, killing or wounding hundreds.

General Currie launched an attack on October 26. He instructed his artillery to fire directly upon the enemy artillery – a practice that by unwritten agreement was not done previously in war. Despite the 2,238 Canadians killed or wounded, the battle was considered a success because it helped the Allies advance to the strategic higher ground. At Passchendaele there were 500,000 casualties, divided almost evenly between British and German troops.

It took 10 years to restore the ravaged battleground to fertile farmland, and some fields even today are fit only for cattle, too dangerous for agricultural machinery because of tunnels below the earth.

SOURCE: CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

Canadian athletes who fought in the War

Many Canadian athletes fought in the war. Here are five of them.

Ross Binkley

He was called one of the best rugby players in Canada, winning a national championship with his team in Dundas, Ont., before moving to Toronto and joining the Argonauts football team. He led the Argos in scoring in 1910 and 1911, served as a captain, and in 1913 set a team field-goal record

battle in France in June 1915, age 24. He was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1950.

Tom Longboat

He was a legendary long-distance runner who won the 1907 Boston Marathon and competed for Canada at the 1908 Olympics. Longboat, an Onondaga from Six Nations,

hockey and rugby at the top levels. He was badly wounded at the Battle of Mount Sorrel in June 1916 but recovered and returned to action. In July 1917, he was shot and killed in an artillery attack at Pas-de-Calais, near Vimy Ridge. He was 36. In his will, he left \$75,000 to his alma mater, McGill University, to build a stadium, which was named in his honour. Today it's the home of the CFL's Montreal Alouettes.

Bobby Powell

Robert Branks Powell was born and raised in Victoria. From 1900-04, he balanced his job as private secretary to the lieutenant-governor of British Columbia with his tennis career. He was a repeat provincial champion and founded the North Pacific International Lawn Tennis Association in 1904, when he was 23. He then went to Britain to study law and won more championships there.

In 1908, he represented Canada at the Olympics, and also made it to the men's semifinals at Wimbledon – a record for Canadian men that stood until Milos Raonic matched it in 2014. He also captained Canada's first Davis Cup team in 1913. Powell became a lieutenant in Canada's army in September 1914. He died at the battle of Vimy Ridge on April 28, 1917, age 36.

STEPHANIE MACLELLAN/TORONTO STAR



Tom Longboat won the 1907 Boston Marathon and competed for Canada at the 1908 Olympics

while also coaching. He enlisted with the infantry but later transferred to the machine-gun division to be with two of his friends. He was killed at Ypres in April 1915, age 31.

Allan "Scotty" Davidson

A star with his hometown Kingston Frontenacs of the OHA junior hockey league, Davidson was signed by the Toronto Blue Shirts of the National Hockey Association, a precursor to the NHL, in 1912. The right-winger scored 19 goals in 20 games in his first season and 23 goals the next, leading the team to the 1914 Stanley Cup. Davidson enlisted later that year and was killed in

enlisted in 1916 and became a dispatch carrier with the 107th Pioneer Battalion in France, running messages between units. He was wounded twice during the war – once so badly he was officially declared dead – but survived and returned to Canada in 1919. He died in 1949 at age 62.

Percival Molson

A scion of the famous brewing family, Molson was a multi-sport star in Montreal. He set a world record in long jump in 1900, raced in the 400-metre dash for Canada at the 1904 Olympics, captained the Montreal Football Club from 1902 to 1906, and played



Surviving soldiers from the two sides make their way together in the aftermath of the bloody 1917 battle at Passchendaele, Belgium.

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA

Women in the Great War



Canadian nurses, May 1917.

At the beginning of the war, the contributions of women were basically an extension of their domestic work. They knitted socks, rolled bandages, and wrapped food parcels to send to the troops. Women put on variety shows and used the money they raised to buy supplies that were needed overseas.

With so many men serving overseas it became necessary for women to work outside the home, often taking jobs that were traditionally done by men. Even though they performed

the same work as the men they replaced, they were often paid less.

Women were now called upon to run farms, build aircraft and ships, and work in munitions factories. By the end of the war they had earned the right to vote and were gaining

DID YOU KNOW?

Nicknamed *Bluebirds* by soldiers, Canada's nursing sisters played a vital role in the care of the wounded.

independence in society.

More than 3,000 nurses served in the Canadian Army Medical Corps, including 2,504 overseas. They were nicknamed "bluebirds" because of their blue uniforms and white veils.

The average age of Canada's nurses was 24, and almost all were single. All were volunteers and there was never a shortage of candidates. In January 1915, for example, there were 2,000 applicants for 75 positions.

Nurses did not work in the front-line trenches, although they were often close to the



Women soldering fuses at Verdun, Quebec.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF CANADA.

front. As patients arrived, the nurses met the wounded soldiers, cleaned wounds and offered comfort. They assisted in surgery and often had primary responsibility for

cleaning post-surgical wounds and watching for infections.

Following the war, women returned to their traditional unpaid roles.

CONTINUED IN THE NOVEMBER 4 EDITION.

WOW

(Weapons Of War)

Many weapons were invented or first used during World War I. Big Bertha was one of the most famous; it was a 48-ton gun capable of firing a shell over 14 kilometres. It took 200 men several hours to assemble the gun.

The Canadian-made Ross Rifle, meant to replace the British-made Lee-Enfield, was a colossal failure. Despite modifications, including a re-boring of the gun chamber, the rifle had the reputation for jamming and clogging.

Cannons and artillery were often extremely loud. In 1917, the explosives used to destroy a bridge in France could be heard more than 200 kilometres away in London.

Tanks were initially called "landships." In an attempt to disguise them as water storage tanks rather than weapons, the British decided to code name them "tanks."

There were also male and female tanks; male tanks had cannons and female tanks had machine guns.

"Little Willie" was the first prototype tank in WWI. Built in 1915, it carried a crew of three, could travel

as fast as 4.8 km/h and it could not cross trenches.

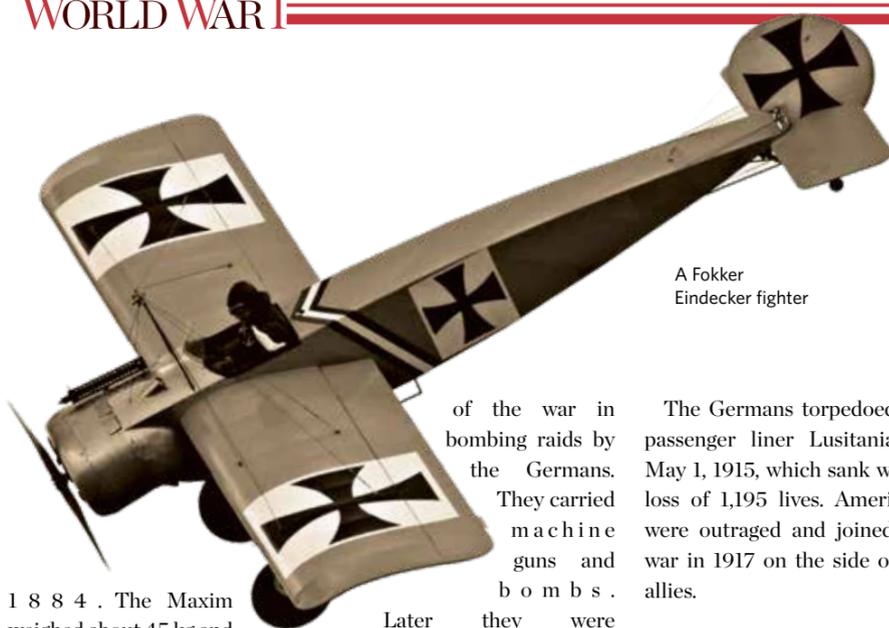
A more modern tank was developed just before the end of the war. It could carry 10 men, had a revolving turret and could reach a speed of 6.4 km/hr.

Tanks were first used during the Battle of Flers-Courcelette in 1916.

Germans were the first to use flamethrowers in WWI. Their flamethrowers could fire jets of flame as far as 40 metres. Soon the British had developed superior flamethrowers.

The first military submarine, the Turtle, was first used during the American Revolution. Submarines made a large military impact during WWI when Germany launched its fleet of U-boats. Its submarines mostly stayed on the surface and submerged only to attack ships with torpedoes. Germany's indiscriminate submarine warfare was a primary reason the U.S. joined the war.

WWI introduced the widespread use of the machine gun, a weapon Hiram Maxim patented in the U.S. in



A Fokker Eindecker fighter

1884. The Maxim weighed about 45 kg and was water-cooled. It could fire about 450-600 rounds per minute. Most machine guns used in WWI were based on the Maxim design.

The French had what German soldiers called the Devil Gun. At 75 mm, this cannon was accurate up to 6.4 kilometres.

Large field guns (artillery) had a long range and could deliver devastating blows to the enemy but needed up to 12 men to work them. They fired shells, which exploded on impact.

The main weapon used by British soldiers in the trenches was the bolt-action rifle. Fifteen rounds could be fired in a minute and kill a person 1,400 metres away.

The Zeppelin, also known as a "blimp", was an airship that was used during the early part

of the war in bombing raids by the Germans.

They carried machine guns and bombs.

Later they were abandoned because they were easy to shoot down.

Approximately 30 poisonous gases were used during WWI. Soldiers were told to hold a urine-soaked cloth over their faces in an emergency. By 1918, gas masks with filter respirators usually provided effective protection. At the end of the war, many countries signed treaties outlawing chemical weapons.

Planes were used for the first time in WWI. At first they were used to deliver bombs and for spying work but became fighter aircraft armed with machine guns, bombs and sometimes cannons. Fights between two planes in the sky became known as "dogfights".

The Germans used torpedoes, fired from submarines, to blow up ships carrying supplies from America to Britain.

The Germans torpedoed the passenger liner Lusitania on May 7, 1915, which sank with a loss of 1,195 lives. Americans were outraged and joined the war in 1917 on the side of the allies.



Gas mask

DID YOU KNOW?

The term **dogfight** originated during WWI. Sometimes pilots had to turn off their engines so they would not stall when the plane turned quickly in the air. When the pilot restarted his engine midair, it sounded like dogs barking.



British tank of First World War



The Maxim machine gun



Victoria Cross

The Victoria Cross is the Commonwealth's highest military decoration, awarded for valour "in the face of the enemy."

Among the World War I recipients with Toronto connections were Thain MacDowell and Billy Bishop and these five soldiers:

Algie, Wallace Lloyd

At Cambrai on Oct. 11, 1918. Killed in action that day.

Barker, William George

In France on Oct. 27, 1918. Fighter pilot downed 50 enemies during the war; later became president of Toronto Maple Leafs before dying in a plane crash in 1930.

Barron, Colin Fraser

At Passchendaele on Nov. 6, 1917, fighting with Toronto's 3rd Battalion.

Holmes, Thomas William
Near Passchendaele on Oct. 26, 1917, for staging a successful solo attack on a German pillbox. Later became a pilot with the Toronto Harbour Commission.

Rutherford, Charles Smith:

At Monchy-le-Preux, France, on Aug. 26, 1918. Later became sergeant-at-arms at the Ontario legislature. His ghost is said to haunt Queen's Park.

Source: Department of National Defence

CHECK IT OUT

Go to www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/medals/victoria-cross-recipients.html to read about other Canadian recipients of the Victoria Cross.

MEDAL SET: CWM 19710077-001
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The Halifax Explosion



Halifax's Exhibition Building. The final body from the explosion was found here in 1919.

The largest man-made explosion to occur before the dropping of the atomic bombs during the Second World War rocked the city of Halifax on December 6, 1917. The Mont Blanc, a

French vessel loaded with 2.9 kilotons of explosives, collided with a Belgian relief ship, Imo, in Halifax harbour.

A fire broke out on the Mont Blanc. When the flames reached the Mont Blanc's

volatile cargo, the resulting explosion devastated about six square kilometres of the city.

The Richmond district in the city's north end and the Dartmouth region across the harbour were all but wiped out. The official death toll was 1,963, with another 9,000 injured and 6,000 left homeless.

WWI BY THE NUMBERS

7.8
MILLION PEOPLE
LIVED IN CANADA

620,000
CANADIANS ENLISTED

424,000
SERVED OVERSEAS

6,000
CASUALTIES IN CANADA'S
FIRST BATTLE AT YPRES

10,600
CANADIAN CASUALTIES AT
VIMY RIDGE

15,654
CANADIAN CASUALTIES AT
PASSCHENDAELE

60,661
CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY
FORCE MEMBERS KILLED
DURING THE WAR

172,000
CANADIANS WOUNDED

1,305
NEWFOUNDLAND SOLDIERS
KILLED

2,300
NEWFOUNDLAND
SOLDIERS WOUNDED

SOURCES: CANADIAN WAR
MUSEUM, MARIANOPOLIS
COLLEGE

No. 2 Construction Battalion (CEF)

Canada's only segregated Black unit

Almost as soon as the war began, black soldiers across Canada were enlisting.

There were reports of a handful of black soldiers departing for England among the Canadian soldiers, and the list of soldiers of the Toronto Regiment included a few of "dark" complexion who listed birthplaces in the West Indies.

But there were also reports from across the country of black men being turned away because of their skin colour. Some were told it was "a white man's war."

There was an irony to these willing, healthy young men being rejected by an army that was

crying out for recruits. "The lack of sufficient reinforcements for battalions at the front was becoming a serious national problem," wrote Calvin W. Ruck. "Throughout the country, that divisive word 'conscription' was being heard more and more. And still the issue of accepting or continuing the unofficial policy of rejecting Black volunteers had not been resolved by the civilian and military hierarchy."

In Toronto, J.R.B. Whitney, publisher of a newspaper for the black community, the Canadian Observer, put out a call to recruit a unit of 150 black men in November 1915. Minister of Militia Sam Hughes told him

such a unit could become a platoon in any existing battalion. With a condition: the battalion's commanding officer would have to accept the men first. That March, word came down that no commanding officer would accept a "coloured platoon" and Whitney was denied permission to recruit.

He appealed again to Hughes: "Through the columns of the Canadian Observer, I have published a call for recruits for the Coloured Platoon. Many have responded to the call, and are eagerly waiting to be uniformed in the King's colours . . . I trust that you will see to it that the Coloured Platoon will be placed



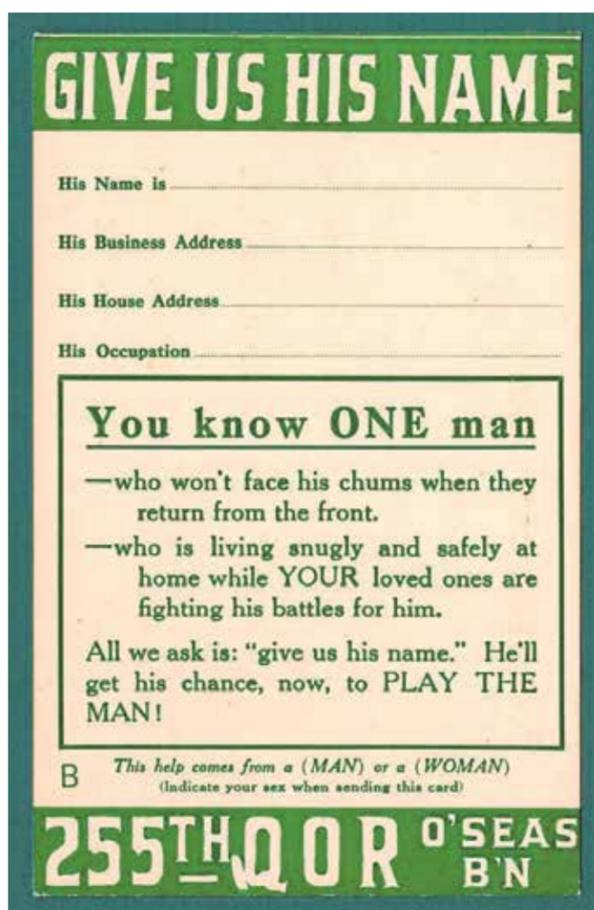
Members of the No. 2 Construction Battalion based in Truro, N.S.

with some battalion, otherwise there will be a great disappointment with the Race." Again, unsuccessful.

A solution was found: the creation of an all-black labour

battalion, the No. 2 Construction Battalion. It was based in Truro, N.S., with a few Toronto soldiers in the ranks. Few ever saw combat.

STEPHANIE MACLELLAN/TORONTO STAR



SOURCE: CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

Patriotism or peer pressure?

In 1914, Canada was a nation of fewer than 10 million people. However, it provided more than half a million combat troops, as well as thousands of women as nursing sisters.

For the first two years of war, Canada relied on a voluntary system of military recruitment. Canadians rushed to enlist for reasons of patriotism, adventure, opposition to German aggression, or personal attachments to Great Britain. Public attitudes and peer pressure also influenced decisions to enlist. Many people felt that those who failed to enlist were cowards or slackers.

Newspaper columns and editorials, political speeches, and lectures from the pulpit urged men that it was their duty to serve in the military. Early in the war, recruitment posters urged men to enlist on the ba-

sis of patriotism and emotional connections to the war's issues. Later, more desperate posters tried to shame men into enlisting by questioning their loyalty and their courage. Wartime propaganda also urged women to pressure men to enlist.

Not all eligible Canadians volunteered for service. Two groups, in particular, were labelled as disloyal or cowards: French Canadians and pacifists. Proportionally, French Canadians lagged far behind English Canadians in enlisting.

French Canadians in Quebec had no strong attachment to either Britain or France. They were not pleased with the fact that the French language was not given a meaningful place in Canada's armed services. French Canadians had to serve under English-speaking officers in English-speaking units. An

exception to this was the Royal 22nd Regiment, the Vandoos.

At a time when the federal government was pressuring French Canadians to enlist, provincial governments in Ontario and Manitoba were eliminating support for bilingual schools.

Pacifists were categorized into two groups. First, there were religious groups such as the Quakers, Mennonites and Hutterites who were opposed to fighting on religious grounds.

Then there were members of the peace movement who preferred international arbitration and the courts as the way to stability and order in the world.

Canada's voluntary recruitment weakened in 1916 in the face of continuing losses overseas, emphasized by the publication of growing casualty lists in newspapers and postings in public places.

Victory Bonds

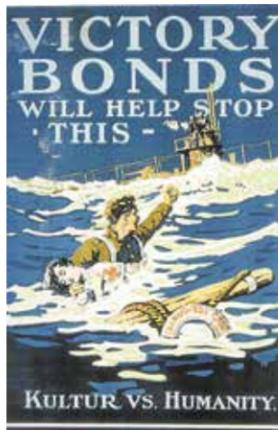
The First World War was longer and more expensive than anyone had expected. Canada's federal budget quadrupled from \$185 million before the war to \$740 million at its peak; at the same time, its debt quadrupled to \$1.2 billion. To make up the shortfall, the federal government issued a series of bonds — essentially loans from Canadians to their government that could

be redeemed after five, 10 or 20 years, with interest rates of up to 5.5 per cent. Victory Bonds were a success. Five bond sales campaigns between 1915 and 1919 raised a total of \$2 billion.

Another measure to pay for the war was a temporary tax on personal incomes, introduced in 1917. Nearly 100 years later, Canadians still pay income tax today.

One Victory Bonds' campaign poster, right, evoked the Llandoverly Castle Hospital ship. Another, far right, featured a young Toronto girl named Faith Berry, who was given a \$500 bond and a bouquet of flowers in return for posing.

ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO



The poppy



The poppy was first worn as a symbol of remembrance in 1918 by Moina Michael, who worked for the American Overseas YMCA. She was inspired by the imagery in Canadian army medic John McCrae's poem, "In Flanders Fields."

"In a high moment of white resolve, I pledged to keep the faith and always to wear a red poppy of Flanders Fields as a sign of remembrance and the emblem of 'keeping the faith with all who died,'" she said.

Thanks to Michael's efforts,

the American Legion recognized the poppy as an official symbol of remembrance in 1920.

A Frenchwoman named Anne Guerin took up Michael's cause. The group she worked for, the American and French Children's League, sold cloth poppies to help areas of Europe that had been devastated by the war. In 1921, she travelled to Britain and Canada to spread the message, and both the British Legion and the Canadian Great War Veterans Association took up the symbol.

In Canada, wounded veterans started making poppies in 1922. Commercial versions were available but Canadians were urged to buy the veteran-made ones as a "true memorial." Today the Royal Canadian Legion (a descendent of the Great War Veterans Association) raises more than \$14 million annually through its Poppy Campaign to support veterans and their families.

SOURCES: CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM; THE ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

CONTINUED IN THE NOVEMBER 5 EDITION.

Canada's last WW I veteran dies

John Babcock's death at 109 marks 'end of an era'

Canada's last surviving World War I veteran, John Henry Foster Babcock, was a 15-year-old farmhand from Frontenac County, Ont., when he decided to sign up for the army in February 1916. He was enchanted by the war stories he heard from officers who came on a recruiting trip to the rural county north of Kingston, and, as one of 13 children with a widowed mother, he was eager for the extra money. "I would get a dollar and 10 cents a day — good money," said Babcock, who went by "Jack." "On the farm I was only getting 50 cents a day."

Even though he put down his real birth date on his attestation form — July 23, 1900 — and stood just 5-foot-4½" the doctor who examined him in Kingston recorded his apparent age

as 18. With that, Babcock was able to join the 146th Battalion. He made it as far as Valcartier, Que., where another doctor at the training camp discovered his real age, and deemed him too small to be a soldier regardless: "General physical condition slight. 16 years age. Chest measurements under normal."

So he tried his luck with another unit, the Royal Canadian Regiment, and this time his age went undetected. He shipped out to England with them that fall. Overseas, Babcock bounced around between reserve battalions, getting more training while waiting for his turn to see action. He never got that chance. Once again, his real age was discovered, and in August 1917 he was sent to the Young Soldiers Battalion — basically a training unit for boys who had made it

overseas but were not yet 19, the minimum age to serve in the trenches. When the war ended in 1918, he was still eight months shy of his 19th birthday. Babcock sailed home to Canada, moved to the U.S. a few years later, settled on the West Coast, worked in heating and plumbing, married twice, had two children and a bevy of grandkids and great-grandkids. He had to give up his Canadian citizenship to become a naturalized American citizen, but Canada reinstated it at a special ceremony in his Spokane, Wash., home in 2008. Later that year, the Royal Canadian Regiment gave him the honorary title of regimental patriarch. Babcock died on Feb. 18, 2010, at the age of 109. A few years before his death, the Canadian government offered to give him a state funeral. He declined.



"I would get a dollar and 10 cents a day — good money. On the farm I was only getting 50 cents a day."

John Babcock, the war's last surviving veteran, died in 2010 at 109.

SOURCES: LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA; DAN BLACK AND JOHN BOILEAU, OLD ENOUGH TO FIGHT: CANADA'S BOY SOLDIERS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR, 2013; VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA; TORONTO STAR ARCHIVES

Because he never saw service, he saw himself as just a "tin soldier," he said. "I don't consider myself to be a veteran because I never got to fight."

STEPHANIE MACLELLAN/TORONTO STAR

Underage soldiers

Canadians had to be at least 18 years old to join the military, and 19 to fight in the trenches, but an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 signed up to fight in World War I while they were younger, and about 2,270 of them were killed. The youngest soldiers known to enlist with the Canadian Expeditionary Force were two 10-year-olds, but they didn't make it overseas.

Enlisting was often as simple as lying to the recruiting officer about your age. One Toronto boy, Pte. David Waldron, used the common ploy of wearing long pants instead of the typ-

ical schoolboy shorts to make himself seem older. He enlisted with the Central Ontario 58th Battalion in June 1915 when he was 16.

Some boys were caught faking their ages and sent home, like Toronto's Richard Harbord, far right, who already had a father and two older brothers in the military. He was not yet 15 when he tried to enlist in March 1916.

But many recruiting officers, under pressure to keep numbers up as the war ground on, turned a blind eye to suspiciously youthful 18-year-olds. Canadians didn't seem very troubled by the idea of sending teenagers into battle either, Dan Black and John Boileau write in *Old Enough to Fight*: "More Canadians were concerned about whether or not soldiers should be able to buy a beer in a wet



Corp. J. Harbord.



L.-C. L. Harbord.



Pte. E. Harbord.



Richard Harbord

Richard Harbord, 14, tried to enlist in 1916. His father and two brothers were in the military

canteen than they were about boy soldiers killing and possibly being killed in front-line trenches."

Underage soldiers had to deal with all the risks and hardships faced by their older comrades.

Waldron fought in Belgium and at the Somme, and was rec-

ommended for a Military Medal in June 1916. He escaped death more than once, including when he was almost hit by friendly fire while on a night patrol in no-man's land in January 1917.

Pte. J.D. Thomson, 17, wrote home describing the miserable

Christmas Eve he had in 1916, trying to sleep in a dugout with two-inch-deep mud.

"I am only 17," he wrote. "I am only a mere boy, but I thought I was a man, and now I know I have to stick to it."

SOURCES: OLD ENOUGH TO FIGHT; CANADA'S BOY SOLDIERS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR, DAN BLACK AND JOHN BOILEAU; TORONTO STAR ARCHIVES

CHECK IT OUT

Canadian youth growing up in wartime.

www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/historical-sheets/youth

November 11 at 11 a.m., fighting ends, peace process begins

The final Allied push toward the German border began in 1918. As the British, French and American armies advanced, the collapse of the Central Powers came swiftly. Bulgaria was the first to sign an armistice on September 29, 1918 and the Ottoman Empire followed on November 3. Left alone in the fight, Germany began to crumble.

There were strikes and demonstrations in German cities protesting the effects of the war. The British naval blockade of German ports left thousands of people starving. In October 1918 German Commander Erich Ludendorff resigned and the German navy mutinied. The end was near. On November 9, Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated and fled to exile in the Netherlands.

A German Republic was declared and an offer of peace was extended to the Allies. Early in the morning of November 11 an armistice was signed in a railroad car parked in a French forest near the front lines. The terms of the agreement called for the fighting along the entire Western Front to stop.

WWI did not really end in November 1918; only the fighting stopped. The war was formally concluded by a series of peace

treaties. These discussions, together known as the Paris Peace Conference lasted from January 12, 1919 until January 20, 1920. The leaders of all Allied countries except Russia attended the conference. None of the former Central Powers was invited to attend. The so-called "big three" who were the most influential in the discussions were Prime Minister David Lloyd George of the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau of France, and President Woodrow Wilson of the United States.

The leaders agreed to five treaties, each named after the Paris suburb where the talks were held. Trianon with Hungary (June 4, 1919); Versailles with Germany (June 28, 1919); St Germain with Austria (September 10, 1919); Neuilly with Bulgaria (November 27, 1919); and Sèvres with Turkey (August 10, 1920). All treaties were similar in that they imposed on the Central Powers, especially Germany, territorial losses, financial reparations and military restrictions.

Germany, which faced the greatest punishments, also had to accept a "war guilt clause" that made it completely responsible for the outbreak of the war.

WALKING THE WESTERN FRONT

In the spring of 2014, Toronto Star photographer Richard Lautens and reporter Katie Daubs walked the Western Front, following the route taken by Canadian soldiers through trenches and battlefields where Germans and Allies fought a war of attrition, boredom and terror.

Excerpt from Walking the Western Front Series:

...From our desks in Toronto, we plotted our walk with a simple understanding of this war: mud, glory, slaughter, Passchendaele, Vimy, the Somme.

We are war correspondents, 100 years late to the war. There are no witnesses to interview or photograph, no bullets to worry about. The bomb craters are now lily-pad-covered ponds, the trenches are buried under fields of crops.

The assignment is to walk the Western Front, to understand the landscape where Canadian soldiers once hunkered down in the misery of trench warfare and perhaps, by walking past all these battlefields, to understand even a sliver of the burden carried by that once-youthful generation.

Walking has slowed time. We can feel the dull ache of the land's vastness in our hip sockets, the strategic importance of small ridges by our views, the folly of human plans in the insistent rain.

But more than anything, we can feel the lightness of our burden.

We are trying to feel the brutal legacy of this place while having to contend with an unlikely enemy: the peaceful present.



A behind the scenes look at Katie Daubs and Richard Lautens' two-month odyssey following the WWI Western Front of Belgium and France.

<https://projects.thestar.com/walking-the-western-front-world-war-1-centenary/>

Opinion piece

We asked former Scarlett Heights Entrepreneurial Academy student Joshua Watkis to share his thoughts on why it is important for young people to remember a war that took place over 100 years ago. Here is his opinion.

With the beginning of WWI a century behind us, and all the known veterans who fought in this war no longer with us, a question arises. Who will remember? This seems like an awful question but as a young person it is an honest one I have to ask. Aside from Remembrance Day assemblies and the brief units within our history classes that cover WWI, there are few times when we acknowledge our veterans and those who did not make it home. It should be an honour for us

to reflect on their sacrifice. However, there are other reasons to remember this time in history. WWI was a period when we, the human race, devised ways to kill. This opened the gateway for technology to be created that has been advancing for more than a century, technology that is used only to destroy. We must remember the consequences of war and the need for diplomacy and peace among people so that millions of lives will never again be lost because we cannot agree with or accept one another within the global community. The most important

reason to remember, however, is that we need to learn to remember. Each year in November is the perfect opportunity for us to learn to pause for a moment and really reflect on what transpired not so long ago. Maybe then we can understand the importance of dwelling on stories that may at first seem no longer relevant. This will make us more aware of our world today, and the chaos all around us. So who will remember? The answer is simple: all of us. We will, and we must.

JOSHUA WATKIS

Lest we forget

Listen as Gavin Russell uses spoken-word poetry to express his thoughts on World War I.

He is an Ottawa-based poet who grew up in Whitby, Ont. In high school he was a member of the Spoken Word and Poetry Club, where students had the opportunity to learn to express themselves in this popular verse form.

What is spoken word?

Spoken-word poetry is poetry that is written on a page but performed for an audience. Because it is performed, this poetry tends to demonstrate a heavy use of rhythm, improvisation, free association, rhymes, rich poetic phrases, wordplay and slang.

<https://soundcloud.com/cspoeetry/lest-we-forget>



War games

DECODE THE MESSAGE

T R L U X E M B O U R G N K E T
 N B P B I L L Y B I S H O P Y N
 E C N A R F O L J A T W A N S O
 C P N B S K V I M Y R I D G E R
 I L I C A S I G N D E G E Z W F
 T M N O F O C R K A N K S S A N
 S B Z C L Y T H B S C L E U O R
 I O A K A A O S E A H A R I H E
 M G A A N P R N L N A E T A P T
 R Q E G D O Y S G N D I E A A S
 A X M A E P B I I E N A R H T E
 Y P M W R P O K U U L A E E I W
 Y E O E S Y N A M A L I O L P S
 N A S A K P D T Q O O N X M E A
 F S S E I T A E R T E C A E P C
 U D M O N L L O N G B O A T P B

ARMISTICE
 BABCOCK
 BILLY BISHOP
 BELGIUM
 DESERTER
 EPITAPH
 EXILE
 FLANDERS
~~HELMET~~
 LONGBOAT
 LUXEMBOURG
 MUNITION
 FRANCE
 PASSCHENDAELE
 POPPY
 SOMME
 TRENCH
 VICTORY BOND
 VIMY RIDGE
 WESTERN FRONT
 YPRES

UNLISTED CLUE
 The war was formally concluded by a series of these discussions.
 Fill in the squares below (two words)

◆

□ □ □ □ □
 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Reference and resource books and websites:

- <https://www.historicacanada.ca/>
- <http://www.warmuseum.ca>
- <http://www.canadahistory.com>
- <http://www.veterans.gc.ca>
- <http://www.halifaxpubliclibraries.ca>
- <http://www.firstworldwar.com>
- thestar.com/westernfront
- <http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca>
- <http://www.cbc.ca>
- <http://www.thememoryproject.com>

- <http://www.ohrc.on.ca>
- <http://historyarchive.whitetree.ca>
- <http://www.halifaxexplosion.org/>
- <http://www.therooms.ca/>
- <http://www.archives.gov.on.ca>
- <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca>
- <http://thestar.com>
- <http://www.ourroots.ca/>
- <http://canadiangreatwarproject.com>

BOOKS:

- *Discovering Canada: The Great War, Published in Canada by Fitzhenry & Whiteside*
- *Ultimate Illustrated History of The First & Second World Wars, Published by Hermes House*
- *Toronto Star Newspapers Limited*

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We hope you enjoyed this education resource. To download the full 8-page resource and teacher guide, go to classroomconnection.ca/ww1