

Follow the Battalion Lesson Plan

Overview

This lesson will familiarize students with the geographical reality of a battalion's movements during a one month period during the Great War of 1914-1918. Canadian's from across the nation volunteered to be trained, cross an ocean, be trained and drilled even more, then to fight, suffer injury and sickness, and often death. The journey was complex and dangerous. Most of those experiences took place in a geography unfamiliar to today's students.

Aims

- To make students aware of the resources available through Library and Archives Canada's online collection.
- To challenge students to understand the logistical challenges a military force faces to supply even the simplest of resources.
- To give students a better understanding of the movement involved in warfare and theorize on the organizational structure required to make such things happen.
- To create a visual picture of the location-dynamics of warfare.

Resources

Access to local cenotaph or local military museum

Veterans Affairs Canada Website

Library and Archives Canada Website

Canadian War Museum Website

Materials

Computer access to a system with Internet access, screen capture software, and Keynote, Power Point, or other presentation software.

Background

In the great migration of Canadians to participate in the First World War participants came from every corner of the nation to fight for a cause. Understanding that warfare involves mass movements of men and equipment is central to completing this assignment. Considering that the European theatre of war is unfamiliar to most students this assignment will familiarize you with the regions surrounding some of Canada's most revered battle sites. Although trenches lines were fairly static the supply infrastructure

behind those lines was industrially dynamic. This assignment will help you understand the activity in and behind the trenches.

Activity

Begin by ensuring that your computer has the necessary software. There are several forms of presentation software (PowerPoint, Keynote, or free web-based such as Google Docs Presentation). You will also need screen capture software that allows you to create a jpeg image from whatever is being viewed on your computer screen. This avoids having to register for personal accounts with Google or Yahoo maps. MWSnap is a free easily downloaded screen capture program that can be found on the internet.

Visit your local cenotaph or military museum and find the name of the battalion that soldiers in the First World War from your community belonged to. You may also get this information from family members if you had a relative who served, or the local Royal Canadian Legion.

Using the Library and Archives Canada website locate the War Diary for the battalion you are studying. (http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/020152_e.html)

Each war diary contains detailed information filled with military language and abbreviations. Interpreting some of this data may require assistance. At the beginning of each month's war diary there is a log of the battalion's activities during that month. This is the part you are most interested in for this assignment. Your assignment is to create a detailed account of your battalion's movements and actions during a one month period. That time period may be centered around a specific battle or assigned by your instructor.

Begin by creating a flowchart of the movements on a sheet of paper. Then using a web based map plotting program such as Google maps chart out the battalion's movements. Use a level of magnification that allows the geographic movement of forces to be clearly seen. Once each section of this map is done take an image of the map using MWSnap or other screen capture software to create an actual picture of the movement. This will avoid the necessity of establishing an online account. These images should then be inserted into a slide show to allow for a time line progression.

While this assignment is most easily completed on a computer it may be necessary to create the actual battalion pathway using paper maps. The difficulty in this is adjusting the scale of the map and/or simply finding maps suited for the area of study.

Once the complete month is captured the assignment is not complete. . Your slide show is to be more than a series of maps. Realize that your battalion needs to be resupplied with men, equipment, and supplies. Attempt to create this picture by researching the ports and main hubs of supply. Also, war diaries are full of references to equipment used and interactions with other battalions. Increase the breadth of your presentation by researching the basics of these comments. Weather is also recorded in the war diaries; take this information and create a weather chart for the time period. Your presentation software may allow you to superimpose weather information onto your map along with events such as

battles, skirmishes, construction projects, and rest periods. Also, Library and Archives Canada along with the Canadian War Museum have an extensive collection of war photographs; you should strengthen your presentation with appropriate photographic elements.

Your assignment will be complete once you have created a complete visual picture for the time period selected. That will be centered on the geographical timeline you have created.

Evaluation

Teachers will have to construct a rubric that is considerate of class level and resource usage. The teaching experience will be strengthened by an exemplar completed by the instructor themselves. The class presentation should in-part be assessed on the question, "Did the students respectfully consider the sacrifices made by the members of this battalion or regiment?"