

Introduction

The whole Empire will rejoice at the news of yesterday's successful operations. Canada will be proud that the taking of the coveted Vimy Ridge has fallen to the lot of her troops. I heartily congratulate you and all who have taken part in this splendid achievement.

- His Majesty the King George V to Canadian Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, April 10, 1917

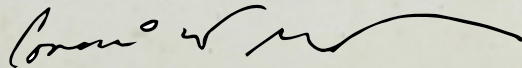
April 9, 1917, was the first time in the First World War that all four Canadian divisions fought on the same battlefield. Early that morning, soldiers from the Canadian Corps left their trenches for an attack on the German-held Vimy Ridge. By April 12, the entire ridge was under Allied control. When Hill 145, the highest feature on the ridge, fell, the operation was considered to be a decisive success. The ridge remained in Allied hands for the rest of the war.

Under the leadership of Canadian Major-General Arthur Currie, Canadian troops meticulously rehearsed for the battle and were given precise information, fortified by models and maps. In the four-day battle, 3,598 Canadians died and another 7,004 were wounded. In the 99 years since it ended, the Battle of Vimy Ridge has been seen by many as a defining moment for Canada. For many historians, Canada's success at Vimy marked the beginning of Canada's emergence from the shadow of Great Britain. Canada was no longer simply a colony; the world began to see Canada as its own nation.

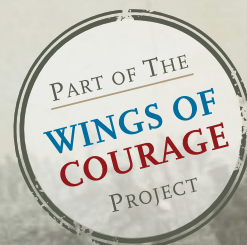
The *Wings of Courage* giant floor map is Canadian Geographic Education's first replica of a historical map. Using a geographic lens, students are led to explore the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The giant floor map's 10 accompanying learning activities have students reading and interpreting trench maps, exploring the physical landscape and weather of Vimy during the battle, analyzing the role of the Canadian Corps, reflecting on war poetry and war slang, and examining the location and significance of the Vimy Memorial.

Soaring above France's Douai Plain, the Vimy Memorial's dedication reads "To the valour of their countrymen in the Great War and in memory of their sixty thousand dead this monument is raised by the people of Canada."

Best wishes to you and your students as you continue to commemorate and remember Canada's role in the Battle of Vimy Ridge.



Connie Wyatt Anderson
Chair, Canadian Geographic Education



About This Resource

In this guide, you will find 10 curriculum-linked activities designed for Canadian students in Grades 7-12. For more information on *Wings of Courage* and *A Nation Soars*, visit anationsoars.ca

1. Reading a Trench Map

Students will explore the value and use of maps during the First World War by investigating the use of map symbols.

2. The Physical Landscape of Vimy

Students will learn how to read contour lines and construct a 3D representation of the elevation of Vimy Ridge and its surrounding area.

3. The Canadian Corps

Students will examine First World War battle formation patches and learn the role of the four divisions of the Canadian Corps at the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

4. The Trenches

Students will investigate life in the trenches during the First World War and examine real trench maps at various map scales.

5. Canadian Advances at Vimy

Students will explore the advances made by the Canadian Corps from April 9 to May 3, 1917.

6. Weather

Students will examine the effects of weather on the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

7. Trench Talk

Students will explore the development of First World War trench slang by comparing slang terms to the features on a battlefield map.

8. War Art and Poetry

Students will discover the connections between art and the geography of the battlefield through First World War poetry and art.

9. Vimy Memorial

Using directional clues and maps, students will locate and identify the Canadian National Vimy Memorial site in France and the geographical significance of its location.

10. Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada

Students will use map skills to compare the Vimy battlefield of 1917 to the present Canadian National Vimy Memorial site in France.



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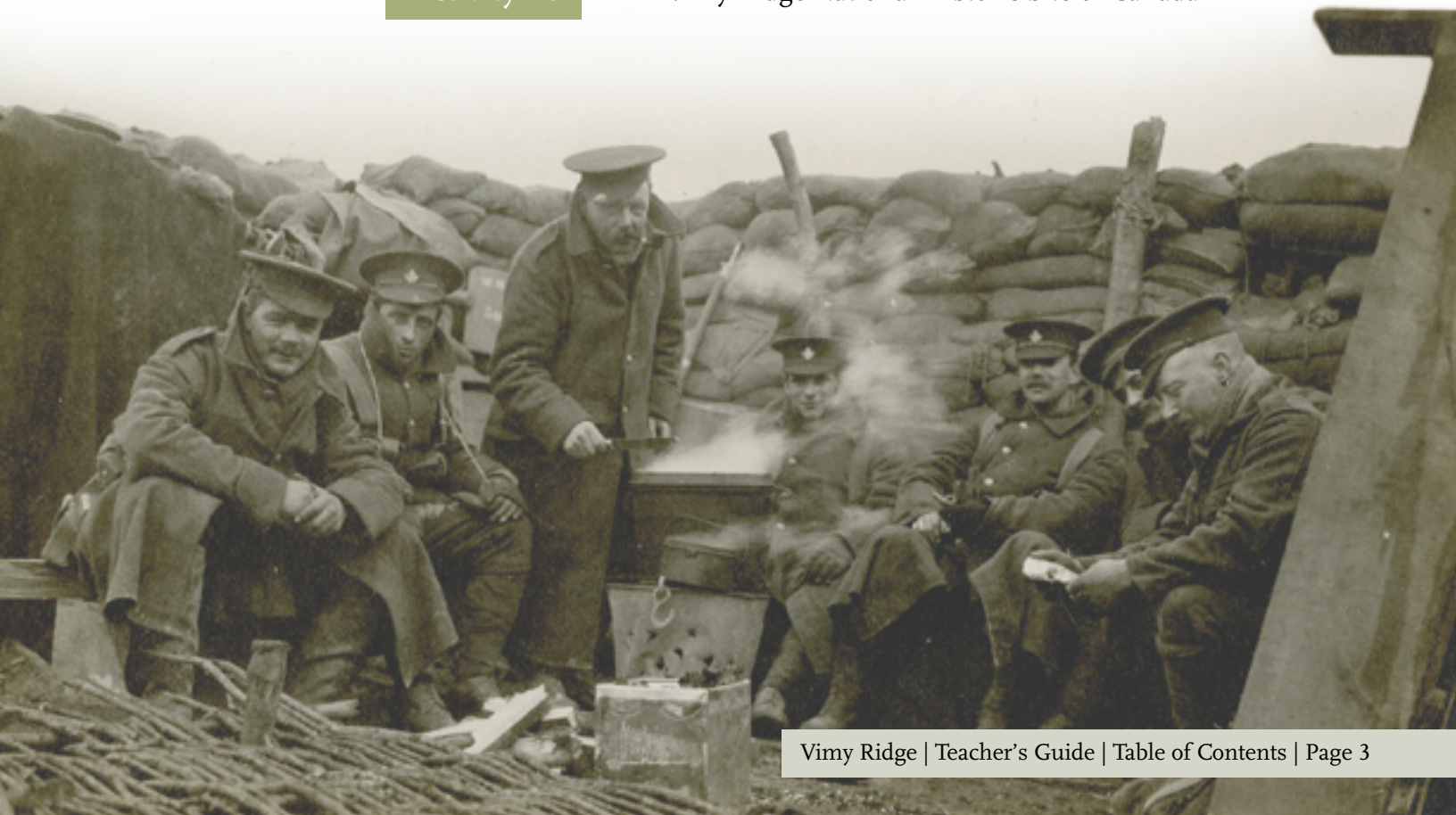
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Learning objectives

- Students will learn how maps were used during the First World War by learning about map symbols.
- Students will apply their map-reading skills to learn to read a historical First World War map.
- Students will review map features and the basic map components.

Grades

7-12

Materials

- Access to *Wings of Courage* website at anationsoars.ca
- Map symbol cards (17)
- Military identity cards (8)
- Pylons (20)
- Chains (16)

Set up

Review the background information below, and set the map symbol and military identity cards near the map's perimeter.

Background

Between October 1914 and July 1918, the Allied forces of Great Britain, France and eventually the United States faced the Central Powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria across a complex system of trenches that ran across Western Europe from the North Sea to the Swiss border.

Millions died fighting for metres of ground. It soon became obvious that to break the stalemate, the Allies would have to find a way to pinpoint the enemy's artillery, machine-gun posts, headquarters, ammunition dumps and other strategic locations. This information came from aerial observation (by balloon or airplane) and from data gathered in raids or from prisoners. Eventually, this led to a sophisticated and thorough mapping system of the enemy's trench systems. The result was hundreds of thousands of printed maps for the Allied soldiers.

Introduction

Encourage students to explore the giant floor map. As student are exploring, provide them with an overview of the First World War, focusing on trench warfare and the importance of maps for soldiers.

Ask students to determine the type of map they are on by asking guiding questions, such as: What do you recognize? What do you see? What country? What do you recognize on the map? What type of map is it?

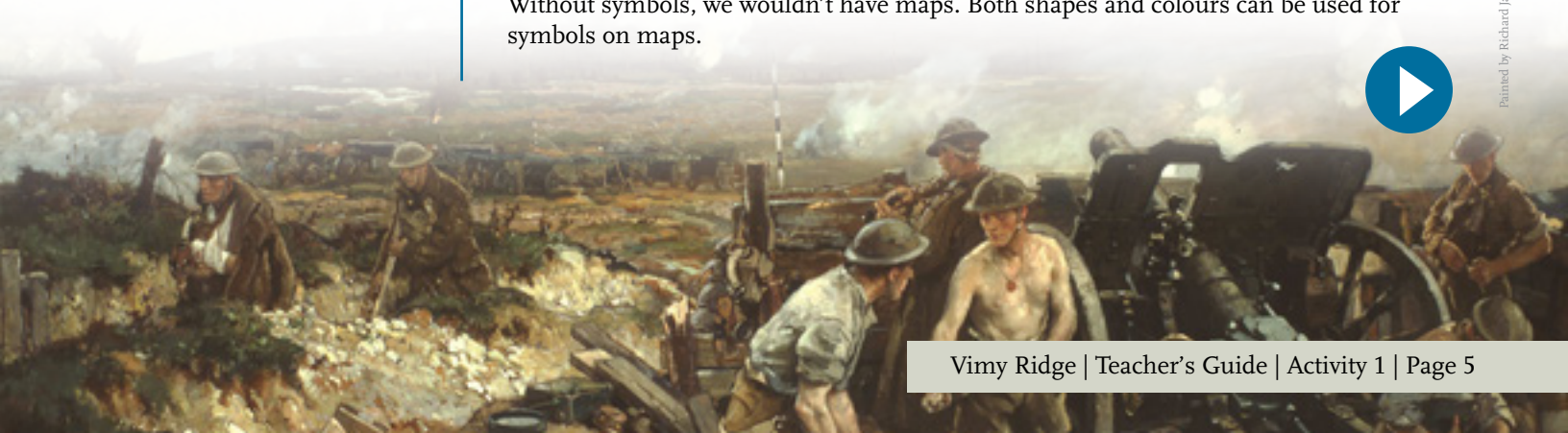
Explain that this is a historical map of Vimy Ridge. It was produced in 1917 and is a copy of one of the thousands that were produced during the First World War. Review the difference between primary and secondary sources. Explain that primary sources offer first-hand information that was recorded at the time the event took place. Secondary sources are documents that provide information based on accounts — written, oral or visual — of the event.

Ask students to consider how maps are used today and how maps were used in the First World War. What are some similarities? What is different?

Ask students to locate and stand on one of the five key components of every map (**legend, title, scale, border, north point/compass**). Discuss why these components are needed on every map.

Development

Bring attention to the symbols used on the map. Remind students that a map is an interpretation of the real world and that map symbols are used to represent real objects. Without symbols, we wouldn't have maps. Both shapes and colours can be used for symbols on maps.



Reading a Trench Map

1

Bring attention to the shapes on the map. Distribute one map symbol card to each student or pair of students. Have them study the card and determine what the symbol represents. Then ask them to locate the symbol on the map. Encourage students to locate more than one symbol and to look for patterns in how they appear on the map. Ask students if these shapes do a good job representing real objects or if they would use a different shape to represent the object.

Next, bring attention to the colours used on the map. What does each colour represent? Which colour shows more detail? Why? Explain that knowing the location of enemy trenches, supply dumps and obstacles on enemy territory was extremely important for all military ranks, but it was dangerous to create a detailed map of their own territory. What would happen if this map got into enemy hands?

Bring attention to Vimy Ridge. Ask: What do the map and the symbols used on it tell us about the location of Vimy Ridge? Why would both the Allies and the Central Powers find this location useful?

Conclusion

Explain that trench maps are invaluable resources for studying the battlefields of the First World War. They show the location of front lines, communication trenches, enemy positions, strong points and defences. They also show the names of farms, woods and villages that have become famous as part of regimental histories, personal stories and war diaries of the soldiers who fought the battles of the Western Front.

Divide students into small groups and give each group a different military identity card. Explain to students that these maps were produced to have such great detail because they could be useful for individuals from all ranks. Ask students to read the information on their card and to use pylons or chains from the trunk to mark what they have to find on the map that would be of interest to their individual. Allow time for each group to share their ideas with the rest of the class.

Extend your geographical thinking

In class, have the students compile First World War trench maps, making note of the different map symbols used on each. What are the most common symbols? Are the symbols unified? What are the rarest symbols? Students can explore First World War trench maps at library.mcmaster.ca/maps/ww1/home.

Links to the Canadian National Standards for Geography

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Essential Element #6:

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- Effects of physical and human geographic factors on major historic events

Geographic Skill #4:

Analyzing geographic information

- Interpret and synthesize information obtained from a variety of sources

Geographic Skill #5:

Answering geographic questions

- Develop and present combinations of geographic information to answer geographic questions



Learning objectives

- Students will use the skills necessary to read contour lines.
- Student will evaluate the merits of topographic maps with contour lines used during the First World War.
- Students will construct a 3D representation of the elevation of Vimy Ridge and surrounding area.

Grades

7-12

Materials

- Access to *Wings of Courage* website at anationsoars.ca
- Large stacking blocks
- Chains (16)
- Pylons (20)
- Teacher information card (1)

Set up

Review background information and set out trunk materials near the perimeter of the map.

Background

Vimy Ridge was a dominant geographic feature on the Western Front. Today, on its highest point (known as Hill 145 during the war) stands the Canadian National Vimy Memorial. Vimy Ridge runs across the western edge of the Douai Plain, rising 110 metres above the surrounding lowlands and stretching for eight kilometres to just north of the French town of Arras. The northern tip of the ridge rises abruptly from the Souchez Ravine to a small knoll, known in 1917 as Hill 120 or “the Pimple” to Canadian soldiers.

From the Pimple, a high saddle leads to the main ridge, with Hill 145 two kilometres to the southeast. From there, the crest slopes down to Hill 135, three-and-a-half kilometres away, widening and flattening as it goes, before dropping gently away into the valley of the Scarpe River. Looked at from the west, the ridge rises very gradually from the road between Arras and Souchez, but on its northeastern side the ridge is markedly steeper.

In 1917, the Germans occupied the territory to the east of the ridge on the Douai Plain. To the west were the British and Canadian lines. German forces were entrenched on the ridge itself, having held it for much of the war, giving them a tactical advantage. Because they controlled the ridge, the Germans possessed a clear and uninterrupted line of sight of all enemy advances. Meanwhile, the Allies could only use aircraft to see beyond the crest and into enemy-held territory.

Before April 1917, more than 100,000 French soldiers had been killed and wounded in efforts to dislodge the Germans from the ridge; the Canadians would be attacking across an open graveyard.

Introduction

Once students have had an opportunity to explore the map independently, draw their attention to the map’s representation of the area’s physical features. Have students find rivers, woods, forested areas and towns. Finally, highlight the map’s contour lines. Ask students what they think these lines mean. (Contour lines are lines drawn on a map connecting points of equal elevation. They show elevation and the shape of the terrain.) Why are contour lines useful? (They’re useful because they illustrate the shape of the land — its topography — on the map. Map readers can determine where features such as mountains, valleys, cliffs and plains are located.)

Ask students to split off into groups and locate any contour line with the number 80 next to it. Have students use the green chains to follow the line as far as the chain can stretch. Have all students stand around the map’s border. Explain that anywhere they see a contour line with 80 means that the land is all at the same elevation. Ask students what the next number lines above and below 80 are. Have students use a red chain to map out contour lines showing an elevation higher than 80 and blue chains to show elevation that is lower.

Next, ask students why some contour lines are closer together than others. Explain that when learning to read contour lines, one of the most important things to remember is that contour lines that are close together symbolize steep terrain, while lines that are farther apart symbolize flatter terrain. Shaded relief added to a topographic map makes it more realistic and helps you visualize the real landscape.



The Physical Landscape of Vimy

2

Development

Ask students to define what a ridge is (a long narrow, steep hill or mountain path), and use the map to help explain their definition by locating Vimy Ridge on it. Have students think about what the opposite of a ridge would be called, and ask if they can locate one on the map. What is the geographical term for this feature? (plain)

Explain that students will be using blocks to create a 3D model of Vimy Ridge on the giant floor map. Divide students into six groups — each group representing a different elevation of the ridge, starting with the contour line 120 and going up in intervals of five until they reach 145.

Ask each group to locate their contour line on the map and work together to learn where it runs throughout the ridge. Using the blocks provided in the trunk, have each group place blocks on their contour line following the guide below.

Contour line	Number of blocks stacked on top of one another
120	1
125	2
130	3
135	4
140	5
145	6

Once all blocks have been placed on the map, have students discuss how they used the contour lines to complete their task. Discuss any patterns or trends they can identify.

Conclusion

Ask students to locate Vimy Ridge by finding the following: Hill 120 (the Pimple), Hill 135, Hill 145, Douai Plain and Scarpe River. Using the teacher information card to guide a discussion about the physical geography of the Vimy region, read the text provided and have students fill in the blanks.

Conclude by explaining to students that topographic surveys were prepared by the military to assist in planning. Information concerning elevation was central to both offensive and defensive action. Ask students to note the British and German trench lines and discuss the following: How did having control over Vimy Ridge give the Germans a strategic advantage in battle? What challenges would the Canadians have encountered attacking the ridge? What value would a trench map be to soldiers in the field?

Extend your geographic thinking

After the map leaves, have your students create a contour map of their hometown. Students can view the terrain of their hometown using Google maps by going to maps.google.ca and clicking on terrain. Once students have completed their maps, host a gallery walk around your classroom so students can show their work.

Links to the Canadian National Standards for Geography

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Essential Element #3:

Human Systems

- Territorial dispute and conflict

Essential Element #6:

The Uses of Geography

- Effects of physical and human geographic factors on major historic events

Geographic Skill #4:

Analyzing geographic information

- Interpret and synthesize information obtained from a variety of sources

Geographic Skill #5:

Answering geographic questions

- Develop and present combinations of geographic information to answer geographic questions

Learning objectives

- Students will examine First World War battle formation patches.
- Students will learn the role of the four divisions of the Canadian Corps at the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Grades

7-12

Materials

- Access to *Wings of Courage* website at anationsoars.ca
- Canadian Corps cards (24: 6 of each colour)
- First World War Canadian Corps: Major battles information card (1)
- Plan of attack map cards (4)

Set up

Review the background information provided with the lesson and examine the map cards provided.

Background

As a dominion of the British Empire, Canada was automatically at war with Germany and its allies when the First World War began in August 1914. However, all Canada could commit to the effort was a tiny navy, a small professional army of about 3,000 and a variety of part-time militia units. After an intense period of recruitment, Canada mustered enough soldiers to contribute meaningfully to British forces, and after a period of training in England, the first contingent, formally known as the 1st Canadian Division, landed in France early in 1915.

In Canada, volunteer recruitment for the war continued, and the Canadian Expeditionary Force grew steadily until 1916. The Canadian Corps became the country's principal fighting force throughout the war and included infantry, artillery and engineering troops, as well as logistics and medical units.

The Canadian Corps grew to include four divisions. The 1st Canadian Division was established in August 1914, the 2nd Canadian Division in May 1915, the 3rd Canadian Division in January 1916, and the 4th Canadian Division in April 1916.

The Canadian Corps was an arm of the British military and led by British generals until Arthur Currie was appointed the first Canadian commander of the Corps, following the unit's capture of Vimy Ridge in 1917.

Introduction

Once students have had an opportunity to explore the map, ask them to stand on the map's border. Using the background information provided above, share a brief overview of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and the Canadian Corps with your students.

Hand out a coloured battle patch to each student. Make sure to distribute them randomly and that all four patch colours are handed out. Explain that during the First World War, as the armies adopted drab coloured uniforms, the combatants needed to find a way to identify friendly troops. The British Army developed a solution whereby individual divisions were identified by distinctive coloured cloth insignia, either sewn to the uniform jacket (on the sleeves, or the back of the tunic), or painted on the helmet. Canadian soldiers had CANADA shoulder titles and, for the most part, cap and collar badges based on the maple leaf.

Tell students that the following coloured patches were worn by the Canadian Corps:

- 1st Canadian Division - **red**
- 2nd Canadian Division - **blue**
- 3rd Canadian Division - **french grey**
- 4th Canadian Division - **green**



The Canadian Corps

3

Ask: What Canadian Corp Division do you belong to?

- Instruct students to flip over their battle patches to find a list of First World War battles their division took part in. Call out the following list of battles and ask students holding the correct division card to step forward if they participated in that battle.
- Battle of Mont Sorrel (Step forward: 1st Division/**red**; 3rd Division/**grey**)
- Battle of Arras (Step forward: 4th Division/**green**)
- Battle of the Somme (Step forward: 1st Division/**red**; 2nd Division/**blue**; 3rd Division/**grey**)
- Second Battle of Ypres (Step forward: 1st Division/**red**)
- Battle of Vimy Ridge (Step forward: 1st Division/**red**; 2nd Division/**blue**; 3rd Division/**grey**; 4th Division/**green**)

All students should step forward when the Battle of Vimy Ridge is called out. Explain to the students that the Battle of Vimy Ridge marked the first time that the whole Canadian Expeditionary Force, all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, fought together.

Highlight Vimy Ridge on the map, and ask student what battle tactics the four divisions could have used, highlighting their strategies on the map as they brainstorm.

Development

Using the four corners of the map, ask students to group themselves into their divisions. Distribute the plan of attack map cards that illustrate the Canadian plan of attack on Vimy Ridge. Point out that there are two sides to their map card. Instruct students to examine the map with the **red border** and find their division's main location on the giant map, placing their cards in a pile at that location.

Using chains from the trunk, have students work together to outline the troop positions. Use blue chains to outline the Allies and red chains to outline the Central Powers. Next, locate Hill 145 on the map and place a pylon there. This is located at contour line 145, near the location of the 4th Canadian Division.

Conclusion

Have students get back into their division groups and turn their map cards over so they are reading the map with the **blue border**. Explain that this map shows the Canadian divisions' plan of attack. Instruct students to take the Canadian Corps cards from their division's pile and place a card on each of the areas where their division was during the Vimy attack.

Ask: What story does the map tell us about the location of the Canadian Corps at the Battle of Vimy Ridge? How do you think fighting together as a single unit affected the Canadians' sense of identity, national pride and awareness? In what ways do you think it affected future battles?

Extend your geographical thinking

Have each division investigate the physical landscape of where they're situated using the contour lines, symbols and the map's scale. Have groups examine the challenges each division may have encountered and discuss as a class.

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Geographic Skill #4:

Analyzing geographic information

- Interpret and synthesize information obtained from a variety of sources

Geographic Skill #5:

Answering geographic questions

- Develop and present combinations of geographic information to answer geographic questions

Learning objectives

- Students will investigate life in the trenches during the First World War.
- Students will examine real trench maps from the First World War at various map scales.

Grades

7-12

Materials

- Access to *Wings of Courage* website at anationsoars.ca
- Chains (16)
- Trench maps (10)
- Whiteboard markers (10)
- Trench routine cards (11)
- Teacher information card (1)
- Trench image cards (22)
- 1:5,000 trench map (10)

Set up

Review the background information provided and examine trench image cards to help with class discussion.

Background

Trenches were essentially long, narrow ditches dug into the ground where soldiers lived all day and night. The troops in the front-line trenches faced the enemies directly. Behind the front line was the second line of support trenches, and behind the second line were the reserve trenches. Between the front-line trenches of the Allied and Central troops was a stretch of land referred to as “no man’s land.” Barbed wire fences, erected at night so their builders wouldn’t be shot, helped to protect front-line troops. Communication trenches were dug connecting the reserve trenches, second-line trenches and first-line trenches, and were used to supply ammunition, mail and food.

The trenches were dug in zigzags rather than straight lines to ensure minimal damage in case of an attack. They were dug deep enough for a soldier to stand upright without his head sticking above the edge. The danger from snipers was severe, and new recruits were cautioned against an impulse to peep over the trenches and lose their lives to a sniper’s bullet.

Soldiers in the trenches did not get much sleep. When they did, it was in the afternoon or at night, but only for an hour at a time. They were woken up at different times, either to complete one of their daily chores, to watch or to fight. During rest time, they wrote letters and sometimes played card games. The trenches were muddy and smelly. There were many dead bodies buried nearby, and the latrines sometimes overflowed into the trenches. Millions of rats infested the trenches, and some grew as big as cats. Lice also tormented the soldiers.

Soldiers in the trenches were put into a cycle known as “trench cycle.” They spent about 60 days in the front-line trenches and another 30 days in the second-line support trenches. Then they served for about 120 days in the reserve trenches and then enjoyed 60 days of leave.

Introduction

Encourage students to explore the giant floor map. Help them to determine what type of map it is by asking guiding questions about what they recognize (i.e., What country do they see? What do you recognize on the map? What type of map is it?)

Draw the students’ attention to the trench lines on the map, using the legend as a reference: What do they see? Whose trenches are depicted? How does the cartographer differentiate between the British and German trenches? Using the scale, calculate the distance between trenches. How many kilometres do the trenches stretch?

Provide students with an overview of trench warfare in the First World War. Check for understanding by asking about their understanding of the following terms: (1) trench, (2) no man’s land, (3) trench warfare, (4) trench cycle and (5) Western Front. Ask volunteers to locate these terms on the map.



Development

Distribute the 1:5,000 scale trench map to small groups of students. Explain that this is a historical map showing the names of trenches surrounding Vimy Ridge. Ask students to examine the names of the trenches and share some of their names as a group. Highlight the trench named “Edmonton.” Explain that the names of trenches were often created by soldiers. Sometimes they were named after places they came from. Using chains from the trunk, have each group select a different trench from their 1:5,000 map cards and map it out on the giant map.

Next, distribute the hand-drawn Vimy Ridge trench maps to pairs of students or small groups. Explain that on one side is an example of a real soldier’s trench map from Vimy, courtesy of the Canadian War Museum. Ask students to compare the two maps. What is highlighted? Is this easy to read or complex? Which one would soldiers find useful and why?

Ask students to flip their trench maps to the blank map side. Explain that they are going to be Canadian soldiers in the trenches and they have to draw their own trench map. Have groups choose an area on the map where Allies trenches are located and use the whiteboard markers to draw their own trench map like the soldier’s map on the other side.

Ensure students highlight key symbols and add a scale and north symbol to make their map complete. Ask students to think about and discuss how their trenches were used. Ask: if you were a soldier in the trenches, in what ways would trench maps be useful to you? Allow time for volunteers to share their trench map with the rest of the group.

Conclusion

Circulate trench image cards. Discuss what these images highlight, and what students think life in the trenches was like. Ask: what concerns would soldiers have living and working in these conditions?

Explain that soldiers were required to follow a strict routine while in the trenches. Randomly distribute the trench routine cards to 11 students. Ask students to line up in chronological order in the centre of the map. Using the teacher information card, read out the soldier duties in a random order and have the rest of the class predict what time these duties would have taken place. Once the students have matched the time with the task, ask the student holding the trench time cards to indicate if the class’s guess was correct or not.

Conclude the lesson by having students get back in their small groups, re-examine the trench map they drew before, and highlight the where key tasks would happen on their trench map.

Extend your geographical thinking

Invite students to study names given to the trenches. Encourage students to go to the online trench maps at McMaster University’s library (library.mcmaster.ca/maps/ww1/ndx5to40.htm) and search for trench names around Vimy Ridge. Do any of them reflect Canadian geography or history? Explain in what ways.

Links to the Canadian National Standards for Geography

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Geographic Skill #4:

Analyzing geographic information

- Interpret and synthesize information obtained from a variety of sources

Geographic Skill #5:

Answering geographic questions

- Develop and present combinations of geographic information to answer geographic questions

Learning objectives

- Students will explore the role of the Canadian Corps from April 9 to May 3, 1917.
- Students will use their map reading skills to learn about the Canadian advances during the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Grades

7-12

Materials

- Access to *Wings of Courage* website at anationsoars.ca
- Pylons (20)
- Chains (16)
- Date tiles (7)
- Advances of Vimy Ridge teacher card (1)
- Map showing advance made by the Canadian Corps (7)

Set up

Review the background information provided and separate chains into individual piles with date tiles on top.

Background

The Battle of Vimy Ridge was fought between April 9 and April 12, 1917. It was the opening battle of a larger British offensive called the Battle of Arras (sometimes known as the Second Battle of Arras). The attack on Vimy was planned in four stages. In the first stage, 20,000 soldiers attacked at 5:30 a.m. on April 9. The Germans were caught off guard, and their first line of defence fell relatively easily. The Canadians struggled with the Germans' fortified machine guns, but thanks to excellent planning, three of the four divisions conquered their objectives by the end of the day. The last was conquered on April 12.

The Canadian Corps was able to drive the German forces off the ridge, but they never managed to thoroughly breach the German line. The Battle of Arras wore on for 39 days, and the casualties mounted. At times, the daily casualty rate was even higher than at the Battle of the Somme. After Vimy, Canadian soldiers remained in the Arras region and were eventually sent to Flanders and Passchendaele.

Introduction

Once students have had time to explore the map independently, have them mark the British trenches using blue chains, German trenches using red chains and the following towns using coloured pylons:

- Petit Vimy
- Vimy
- Givenchy
- Thélus
- Neuville-Saint-Vaast

Instruct students to stand along the blue British trench lines. Point out the location of Vimy Ridge and stand on it facing the students. Provide an overview of the Battle of Vimy Ridge using the background information provided. Check for understanding by asking: When did the battle take place? What Canadian division(s) took part? What was the objective of the battle? How were the towns used during the war?



Development

Divide the class into seven groups. Distribute one map showing the advance made by the Canadian Corps to each group. Instruct them to examine the map and check if they understand by asking: What type of map is it? What does it depict?

Ask them to locate the towns of Petit Vimy, Vimy, Givenchy, Thélus and Neuville-Saint-Vaast on the hand-held map and mark them on the giant map with pylons.

To encourage students to compare the map in their hands with the giant floor map, ask them:

- Near what town was the original British front line located? (*Neuville-Saint-Vaast*)
- At the widest point, how far (in miles/yards) did the Canadians advance on the first day, April 9 (*approximately 2 ½ miles*)
- On what date did the battle of Vimy Ridge begin? (*April 9*)
- By what date had the Canadians captured and passed the towns of Petit Vimy and Vimy? (*April 13*)
- On what date was Vimy Ridge Hill 145 captured? (*April 10*)

Conclusion

Distribute one date tile per group (April 9, April 10, April 12, April 13, April 14, April 28, May 3) and instruct each group to lay their date tile and their chain on the giant map to show the advances of the Canadian troops on that date. Use the map showing the advance made by the Canadian Corps as a guide.

Ask students to study the giant floor map and comment on why this battle was seen as such a success for the Canadian Corps. Read the extract on the advances of Vimy Ridge on the teacher card to provide further context for the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Extend your geographic thinking

There are many connections between Canada and the First World War, ranging from place names to hockey tournaments to national historic sites and to European monuments. Back in the classroom, have students take the The First World War and Canada Quiz found at cangeo.ca/magazine/ja14/quiz.

Links to the Canadian National Standards for Geography

Essential Element #1:

The World in Spatial Terms

- Map, globe, and atlas use

Essential Element #2:

Places and Regions

- Political and historical characteristics of regions

Essential Element #3:

Human Systems

- Territorial dispute and conflict

Essential Element #6:

The Uses of Geography

- Effects of physical and human geographic factors on major historic events

Geographic Skill #4:

Analyzing geographic information

- Interpret and synthesize information obtained from a variety of sources

Geographic Skill #5:

Answering geographic questions

- Develop and present combinations of geographic information to answer geographic questions

Learning objectives

- Students will learn how weather affected the Battle of Vimy Ridge.
- Students will explore the geography of Vimy Ridge and connect it to the weather soldiers experienced during the First World War.

Grades

7-12

Materials

- Access to *Wings of Courage* website at anationsoars.ca
- Plus and minus cards (13)
- Vimy weather cards (13)
- Trench image cards (22)
- Vimy Ridge 9-12 April 1917 map (5)
- Pylons (20)
- (Optional) Internet access/ Imperial War Museum Podcast 25: Winter 1916-17 (16:17) iwm.org.uk/history/podcasts/voices-of-the-first-world-war/podcast-25-winter-1916-17. (Note: you can download this podcast and the rest of the series for free from iTunes. The text of the podcast is available on the website).
- (Optional) Audio equipment (speakers so the students can hear podcast)

Set up

Review background information and set up required materials near maps perimeter.

Background

By 1917, Canadians had experienced three years' worth of weather in the trenches. The land of Belgium and northern France had been turned into a wasteland of mud by rain, snow and constant bombardment. The trenches were filled with mud so deep that some men drowned. They were cold, wet and miserable. Many soldiers died of exposure and disease. Soldiers would sometimes lose fingers and toes as a result of exposure to extreme cold in winter. Rain often filled the trenches, sometimes up to the soldiers' waists. "Trench foot" was a terrible fungal infection caused by soldiers never having the chance to dry their feet. If untreated, the foot would have to be amputated.

The winter of 1916-1917 was the coldest in living memory in France and Flanders. The trenches provided almost no shelter, especially at night, when even clothes and blankets froze solid. The muddy walls became solid, and any food and water became almost impossible to eat or drink unless it could be thawed first.

It was so bad that the attack on Vimy Ridge was delayed by a day because of the weather. The attack finally began at dawn on Easter Monday, April 9, 1917, when all four Canadian divisions swept up the ridge in the midst of driving wind, snow and sleet.

Introduction

Encourage students to explore the giant floor map. Help students determine what type of map it is by asking about what they recognize (i.e., What do they see? What do you recognize on the map?)

Read the following extract aloud to the students:

You can't fight a war without checking the forecast.

The weather doesn't play ball with carefully laid war plans. You can't defeat it like you can defeat an enemy. All you can do is factor it into your calculations and prepare as best you can for the way it will affect your maneuvers.

And when you think about war and the weather, there's no better example than the First World War, when the rain and snow in the skies, and hideous mud below, were enemies in themselves.

Source: How the weather helped (and hindered) at Vimy, The Weather Network

Provide students with an overview of the Battle of Vimy Ridge focusing on the type of weather soldiers experienced during the war. Inform students that they will be focusing on the effects of weather on the Canadian troops during the Battle of Vimy Ridge, April 9-12, 1917.

Ask: How could weather be considered an enemy by First World War soldiers? Distribute the trench image cards. Ask students to describe what they see. How do the images confirm what they have learned about weather and trench warfare?



(Optional)

Play all or an extract of the podcast, Podcast 25: Winter 1916-17. Invite students' comments and queries. Focus their questions on topics pertaining to the effects of weather on warfare:

Quotes from the podcast to discuss:

- "The winter was so cold that I felt like crying. In fact the only time... I didn't actually cry but I'd never felt like it before, not even under shell fire."
- "Mud and cold. Oh, for weeks we were up to the thighs in mud.... And if a man fell into that, he couldn't get out. And they were simply drowned in mud. There was nothing could be done about it."
- "All the time you've got in the trenches, you never knew you'd got trench feet. Your feet were terribly cold with no feeling, but when you got out of the line and you took your boots and socks off, then your feet swelled up and you could never get your boots on again... Trench feet is something to be endured to describe it."

Development

Review how to read contour lines (see [Activity 2: The Physical Landscape of Vimy](#)) and have students locate areas on Vimy Ridge that are steep and those that have a gentle slope. Place a pylon on Hill 145, the highest point on the ridge. Next, distribute the Vimy Ridge 9-12 April 1917 map to students and have them use the red and blue chains from the trunk to map out the front lines for both the Allies and the Central Powers. Ask students which side they think could better protect themselves from the weather. Have them explain their answers by using information from the map.

Divide students into pairs or small groups and distribute one Vimy weather card and one plus/minus card to each group. Have students find a spot on the map and, based on their weather card, determine if that spot would either be an advantage (+) or disadvantage (–) for the Canadian soldiers. Place their weather card and their plus/minus card on this location.

Conclusion

Allow time for each group to explain why their weather card presented a challenge or advantage for Canadian soldiers at the point they selected on the map. Once all the cards have been read and discussed, invite students to move cards, and select a different location with a similar advantage or disadvantage. Conclude by asking students to consider other advantages and disadvantages not indicated on the weather cards.

Extend your geographic thinking

Have students investigate the how the ravages of weather and climate have affected the Vimy Memorial and what has been done to restore it.

Links to the Canadian National Standards for Geography

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Places and Regions

- Political and historical characteristics of regions

Essential Element #3:

Human Systems

- Territorial dispute and conflict

Essential Element #6:

The Uses of Geography

- Effects of physical and human geographic factors on major historic events

Geographic Skill #4:

Analyzing geographic information

- Interpret and synthesize information obtained from a variety of sources

Geographic Skill #5:

Answering geographic questions

- Develop and present combinations of geographic information to answer geographic questions

Learning objectives

- Students will explore the development of First World War trench slang by comparing slang terms to the features on a battlefield map.

Grades

7-12

Materials

- Access to *Wings of Courage* website at anationsoars.ca
- Trench slang cards (22)
- Teacher information card (1)
- Pylons (20)

Set up

Review the background information provided, trench slang cards and symbols used on the map.

Background

The soldiers of the First World War, huddled in their trenches, facing the horrors of modern warfare, found a way to communicate their experiences by developing words of their own, which are now known as “trench slang.” This dialect reflected the unique experiences of the front-line soldier; it drew upon old army terms, bastardized French and the geography of the battlefield. Soldiers used this to speak, sing or communicate with one another and, sometimes, to differentiate themselves from those who had not been through the trench experience.

Trench slang served a variety of purposes. It expressed disdain for one’s superiors or civilians, brought soldiers together with a sense of brotherhood and helped soldiers cope with the horrors of the war by trivializing them. The structure of the army at the front influenced this, particularly in the close bonds between soldiers and in the mixing of men from different parts of the world. The war was a melting pot of soldiers from different backgrounds thrown together under conditions of stress. It was a creative time for language.

Banter, camaraderie and a satirical sense of humour helped make life bearable for the everyday soldier in the trenches during the First World War. Many of the slang terms soldiers devised remain part of the English language today.

Introduction

Encourage students to explore the giant floor map. Draw students to the giant map key and ask students to identify the following symbols on the map:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| • British trench | • observation post |
| • German trench | • dugout |
| • British front-line trench | • mine crater |
| • ground damaged by artillery fire | • road |
| • enemy tracks | • church |
| • buried pipeline or cable | |

Invite students to sit on the perimeter of the map. Ask them if they have ever heard the following words or terms: tank, sniper, shrapnel, cushy, washed up, lousy, snapshot, blind spot, conk out. Explain that all of these words and terms originated during the First World War.



Development

Provide students with an overview of trench warfare using the background information provided in **Activity 4: The Trenches** and in the above background section.

Explain to the students that they will be exploring First World War slang using the battlefield landscape. Distribute one trench slang card to each student or pair of students. Using the teacher information card, call out each trench slang term and invite students to read the definition of the term. Have the rest of the students locate and stand on a place on the map that best matches the slang that was just read. Repeat this until all slang has been defined.

Example:

Teacher: “Bugwarm.”

Student: “A small trench dugout.”

Group stands on a dugout on the giant floor map. Student places card on that spot.

When finished reading and placing all cards, encourage the students to do a “gallery walk” on the map.

Conclusion

Gather up the slang cards and place them around the border for reference. Clear off the rest of the map.

Divide students into small groups and give each group one pylon. Have each group find a location or map symbol on the map and make note of where it is and what is around it. Notify students that they are going to practise their new slang by playing a game. Each group will provide the rest of the class with clues using slang terms and geographic lingo directing them to a specific location or symbol. Each group will use their pylon to identify the place or item on the map the clues are referring to.

Example:

This map highlights me as blue. This is where many soldiers muck about. No man’s land divides me from the Germans. Answer: British trench or Tommy

Extend your geographic thinking

The geography and experiences of the First World War battlefields influenced the English language. Have student investigate how the Battle of Vimy Ridge influenced toponymy (the study of place names and their origins and meanings) in Canada. There are dozens of place names in the country named in honour of Vimy.

Links to the Canadian National Standards for Geography

Essential Element #1:

The World in Spatial Terms

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Essential Element #2:

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- Territorial dispute and conflict

Essential Element #6:

The Uses of Geography

- Effects of physical and human geographic factors on major historic events

Geographic Skill #4:

Analyzing geographic information

- Interpret and synthesize information obtained from a variety of sources

Geographic Skill #5:

Answering geographic questions

- Develop and present combinations of geographic information to answer geographic questions



Learning objectives

- Students will explore the physical landscape and geography of the trench battlefield through First World War poetry and art.
- Students will discover the connections between art and geography.

Grades

7-12

Materials

- Access to *Wings of Courage* website anationsoars.ca
- Coloured chains (16)
- Poems of First World War (5)
- War art image cards (16)
- Whiteboard markers (5)
- Blank cards (20)

Set up

Review the background information provided below. Place war art and war poetry cards in two piles near the map's border. Option to use the trench image cards for additional visual support.

Background

The intense destruction of Belgium and Northern France during the First World War created a new and terrifying landscape unlike anything anyone had seen before: one of mud and death. The trenches of the Western Front were always muddy, even when the weather was dry. The mud was not just wet earth, but a combination of many of the unpleasant byproducts of a war in which hundreds of thousands of men died in small areas.

While the facts and figures of military history have described parts of the war in detail, they do not provide a full picture of the emotional or human impact of the war. Art fills that gap. The First World War, and indeed war in general, is often a source of inspiration for artists who try to make sense of the senselessness of the world around them. War art, particularly First World War poetry, fills some of the human gaps numbers and maps leave.

The mud of the Western Front is mentioned in the art, poetry and memoirs of the time perhaps more than any other object of the war. It hugely affected how the war was fought and how life was experienced by the men in the front lines. It produced a social and cultural landscape that affected every aspect of a soldier's life. The landscape was felt, tasted and smelled. It was lived on and in, and became a living object that the soldiers grew to understand and admire as well as dread and hate.

The mud of the Western Front influenced the work of war poets, authors and visual artists. It seems that once experienced, the mud could not be forgotten. It was as much a part of the war as artillery, trenches, barbed wire, machine guns and death.

Introduction

Encourage students to explore the giant floor map. Draw their attention to the trench lines on the map: What do they see? Whose trenches are depicted and how?

Pass the out blue chains and instruct students to lay them along the British trench lines, tracing the front of the Allies. Next, pass out the red chains and instruct students to lay them along the German trench tracing the front of the Central Powers.

Draw students' attention to the map key on the giant map.

Using the map key, ask students to locate and indicate the following on the giant map:

- ground destroyed by artillery fire
- ditch with permanent water
- entanglement or other obstacle
- dugouts
- earthworks
- nine craters
- enemy's tracks



Ask: How was the First World War fought? Where did the men live and fight? What methods (weapons, tactics) did they use to fight? What do you think the landscape looked like by 1917 after almost three years of war?

Development

Inform students that they will be examining poems written at the time of the First World War. Before distributing the poems, ask students how geography can be connected to poetry. Review how the landscape influenced soldiers and inspired their poetry.

Clear off the map and divide students into five groups. Distribute one poetry card, four blank cards and whiteboard markers to each group. Have each group review their poem and find four adjectives or keywords that describe the landscape of the war. Have them write one word on each blank card. Next, have each group place each word on the map on a place they think the word matches. Have each group share the meaning of their poem, the location of their words and an explanation of why they placed their words where they did.

Have students explore the word map they created. Ask: What word is most common? In what ways do both the giant floor map and the war poetry help us understand what life in the trenches was like for a First World War soldier?

Conclusion

Provide students with an overview of how the First World War was fought with a focus on the mud-riddled landscape of the battlefield using the background information provided in **Activity 4: The Trenches**. Randomly distribute war art image cards to pairs or small groups. Allow time for each group to examine the image and read the caption on the card. Ask students to find an area on the map that may have influenced this image, and place their card there. Allow time for each group to share their image with the group and explain why they feel their piece of art matches their selected piece of landscape.

Extend your geographic thinking

Provide time for students to research soldiers' experiences from the First World War. Using words found in texts that relate to the physical landscape and geography of the war, have students create a found poem. (Found poetry is a type of poetry created by taking words, phrases, and sometimes whole passages from other sources and reframing them as poetry. It is the literary equivalent of a collage.)

See the following for instructions on how to create a found poem:

readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson33/found-poem-instructions.pdf

Links to the Canadian National Standards for Geography:

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The World in Spatial Terms

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Places and Regions

- Political and historical characteristics of regions

Essential Element #3:

Human Systems

- Territorial dispute and conflict

Essential Element #6:

The Uses of Geography

- Effects of physical and human geographic factors on major historic events

Geographic Skill #4:

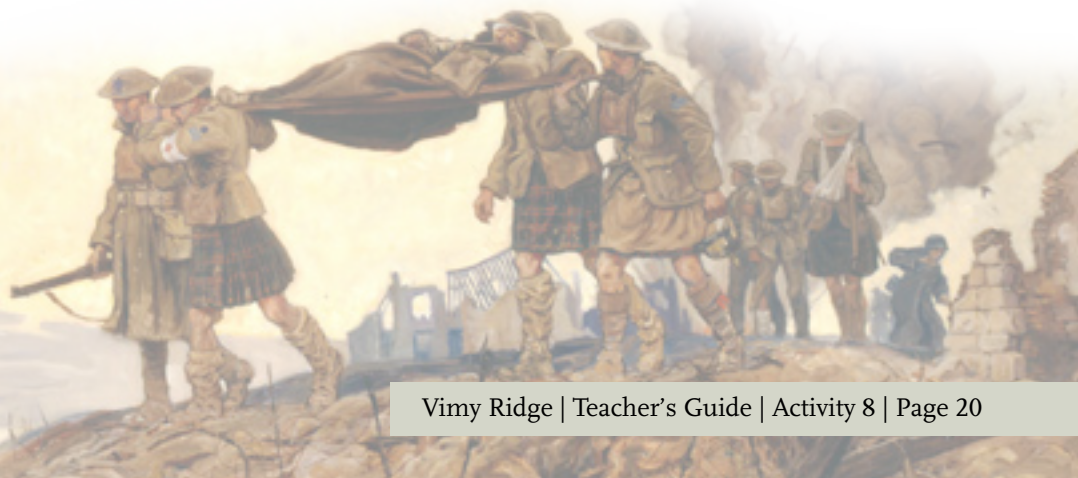
Analyzing geographic information

- Interpret and synthesize information obtained from a variety of sources

Geographic Skill #5:

Answering geographic questions

- Develop and present combinations of geographic information to answer geographic questions



Learning objectives

- Students will use directional clues and maps to locate the Canadian National Vimy Memorial site in France.
- Students will learn about the significant role that Canada played in the pivotal battle of Vimy Ridge.

Grades

7-12

Materials

- Access to *Wings of Courage* website anationsoars.ca
- Chains (16)
- Pylon (20)
- Vimy Memorial picture cards (3)
- Teacher clue card (1)
- Vimy Ridge 9-12 April 1917 maps (5)

Set up

Review the background information provided and required cards necessary for this activity.

Background

The Canadian National Vimy Memorial is a site in France dedicated to the memory of the Canadian Expeditionary Force members killed during the First World War. Situated on land granted to Canada by France, the memorial towers over the scene of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, fought from April 9 to 12, 1917.

The monument itself is the centrepiece of a 112-hectare park that covers a portion of the land where the Canadian Corps made their assault during the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The imposing structure was designed by Walter Allward, who began working on the Vimy Memorial in 1925 and completed it 11 years later at a cost of \$1.5 million. It is adorned with 20 allegorical figures representing faith, justice, peace, honour, charity, truth, knowledge and hope. A significant figure, “Canada mourning her fallen sons,” speaks to Canada’s wartime losses. The Vimy Memorial is inscribed with the names of 11,285 Canadians who were killed on French soil and have no known graves.

The monument sits atop of what was known as Hill 145, so called because it was the highest point of Vimy Ridge, 145 metres above sea level. The ridge runs from Givenchy-en-Gohelle in the northwest to Farbus in the southeast. On its western side, the Vimy Ridge rises gently from Neuville-Saint-Vaast to its high point at Hill 145. There is a much steeper drop to the Douai Plain on its eastern side.

Introduction

Test students’ knowledge of cardinal directions by having students locate the north, south, east and west sides of the map. Have students stand on a town name and determine where on the map it is located in relation to Vimy Ridge by using cardinal directions. For an additional challenge, have students use chains from the trunk to measure the distance between select towns, and ask them to use cardinal directions to explain how to get from one town to another. Discuss what it would have been like living in these towns and the kinds of jobs people would have had in the years before, during and after the war.

Development

Distribute the Vimy Ridge 9-12 April 1917 maps to small groups of students. Explain that this map shows the Vimy Ridge battle. It shows where Canadian division were, as well as the front lines of the Allies and Central Powers. Use the red and blue chains from the trunk to outline the front-line trenches of the Allies and Central Powers. Have each group examine the map and predict where they think the Vimy Memorial is located.



Vimy Memorial

9

Instruct students to compare the information presented on both maps: the giant floor map and the Vimy Ridge 9-12 April 1917 map. How are they different? How are they the same?

Notify students that they are going to estimate where the memorial is located based on a set of clues given. Using the teacher clue card, give students three clues about where the Vimy Memorial is located using geographic terms. Have students listen to each clue and guess where they think the monument is located. Once the class has decided on one location, use a coloured pylon from the trunk to mark it. Adjust the location if needed.

Conclusion

Using chains from the trunk and the map's scale, measure the approximate length of Vimy Ridge. Ask students: How something as important as the Battle of Vimy Ridge should be commemorated? How should memorials use the landscape to commemorate events? Using the background information provided and the Vimy Memorial picture cards, share with students an overview of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France. Discuss the geographical significance of the Vimy Memorial's location. Why is it placed here? Ask students if there is another location where the memorial should be. Why or why not? Conclude your lesson by having students stand on towns labelled on the map and discuss which kinds of monuments or memorials should be erected in nearby towns that were destroyed by the First World War.

Extend your geographic thinking

Once the map leaves, arrange for students to take a virtual tour of the Vimy Memorial. Discuss the importance of memorials and, in particular, the importance of where they are located. Ask students if they can think of a First World War memorial in their town. Have students select a memorial of their choice and do a presentation about the geographical significance of it.

Virtual tour of the Vimy Memorial:

veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/overseas/first-world-war/france/vimy/experience-vimy

Links to the Canadian National Standards for Geography

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Essential Element #6:

The Uses of Geography

- Effects of physical and human geographic factors on major historic events

Geographic Skill #4:

Analyzing geographic information

- Interpret and synthesize information obtained from a variety of sources

Geographic Skill #5:

Answering geographic questions

- Develop and present combinations of geographic information to answer geographic questions

Learning objectives

- Students will use map skills to compare the Vimy battlefield of 1917 to the present Canadian National Vimy Memorial site in France.

Grades

7-12

Materials

- Access to *Wings of Courage* website anationsoars.ca
- Map of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial Park (5)
- Vimy Memorial picture cards (8)
- Modern-day picture cards (2)
- Pylons (20)

Set up

Review background information and locate the site of the Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada on the giant floor map.

Background

The Canadian National Vimy Memorial site is located about 14 kilometres north of Arras, France, near the towns of Vimy and Neuville-Saint-Vaast. The site is one of the few places on the former Western Front where visitors can see preserved trenches from a First World War battlefield and the related terrain in a preserved natural state.

The memorial was designed by a Canadian sculptor and architect, Walter Seymour Allward, and stands on Hill 145, overlooking the Canadian battlefield of 1917. It was unveiled in July 1936 to a crowd of more than 100,000, including 6,000 Canadian veterans who had travelled overseas for the ceremony.

The site's rough terrain and unearthed unexploded munitions make the task of grass cutting too dangerous for humans; instead sheep graze the open meadows of the site. Much of the area has been reforested to prevent erosion.

Visitors today will find the ground pockmarked with shell holes from artillery bombardment and mine craters from the fierce underground war. A portion of the Grange Subway — originally a 1,230-metre-long tunnel to bring troops to the battlefield — still exists to be viewed. Roughly 250 metres of this underground communication tunnel and some of its chambers and connecting dugouts have been preserved. On April 10, 1997, the Canadian National Vimy Memorial was designated as a national historic site of Canada by then minister of Canadian heritage Sheila Copps.

Introduction

Once students have had time to explore the giant floor map, draw their attention to the trenches, as well as other features indicative of trench warfare noted in the map key: ground cut up by artillery fire, ditches with permanent water, entanglements or other obstacles, dugouts, earthworks, mine craters and enemy tracks. Ask: What do you think the landscape looks like today as a result of the war? Bring attention to the following features on the map:

- roads
- railways
- towns
- dugouts
- British and German trenches
- observation posts
- obstacles
- ground cut up by artillery fire
- mine craters

Have students locate these on the map and ask them to determine which features they think they could still see today. Which features would no longer exist?



Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada

10

Development

Provide students with an overview of the Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada and distribute copies of the map of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial Park to small groups. Check for understanding by drawing students' attention to the map key. What do they see?

Compare the key on the giant map and the key on the map of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial Park. What similarities do they see? What differences?

Ask: What are the four towns listed on the map of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial Park? (Givenchy, Vimy, Thélus, Neuville-Saint-Vaast) Have the students locate these on the giant floor map by placing a pylon on each town.

Ask: Where do you estimate Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada sits today? Hand out a coloured pylon and ask students to place it on the correct spot on the giant map.

Circulate the two modern-day photos of Vimy Ridge and have students explore the map and imagine what Vimy Ridge looks like today. Using materials from the trunk, have students work together to map out what Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada looks like today. For example, use one colour of chains to map out roads, another to map out walkways, pylons to map out parking lots, etc.

Conclusion

Invite students to compare and contrast images of the Vimy battlefield in 1917 with the site of the Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada today. Ask: How should a location as important as Vimy Ridge be preserved?

Extend your geographic thinking

Divide students into four groups and give each group one of the four towns they identified on the map (Givenchy, Vimy, Thélus, Neuville-Saint-Vaast). Book a computer lab and allow time for each group to explore what the towns look like today and how they may have been affected by the First World War. Have them present their findings to the class.

Links to the Canadian National Standards for Geography

Essential Element #1:

The World in Spatial Terms

- Map, globe, and atlas use

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