

Chapter Six

WORLD WAR I

The general impression in my mind is of a nightmare. We have been in the most bitter of fights. For seventeen days and seventeen nights none of us have had our clothes off, nor our boots even, except occasionally. In all that time while I was awake, gunfire and rifle fire never ceased for sixty seconds... And behind it all was the constant background of the sights of the dead, the wounded, the maimed, and a terrible anxiety lest the line should give way.



Figure 6-1 The excerpt is from a letter written by John McCrae to his mother in April 1915. McCrae, a surgeon and the author of the poem "In Flanders Fields," was describing the conditions at a field hospital during the Second Battle of Ypres. The unidentified soldier in the photograph was one of about 600 000 Canadians who served in World War I.

What were the causes and consequences of World War I?

The eyes of the unnamed soldier in Figure 6-1 bear witness to the nightmare that John McCrae described in his letter from the front. World War I changed the world for many people — the sailors who fought at sea, the soldiers and pilots who fought in Belgium and France, the nurses and doctors who treated the wounded, and the Canadians at home who supported absent family members and friends, feared for their safety, and mourned their loss.

World War I helped shape Canadians' sense of themselves and their role in the world. Canadians' responses to the war also influenced the way people in other countries viewed Canada.

Examine the photograph and letter on the previous page, and then respond to the following questions:

- What do these primary source documents — the letter and photograph — convey about the experience of those who served in World War I?
- How do these documents help you understand why this war was significant in Canadian history? How might these primary sources help you understand some current issues?
- In light of McCrae's words, how would you sum up how war affects soldiers — on both sides of the battle lines?
- How much do you think the experience of war has changed for soldiers? Canada was involved in the Afghanistan War from 2001 to 2014. How might the experiences of the Canadian soldier in the photograph be similar to those of a soldier serving Canada today? How might their experiences be different?

Key Terms

imperialism
militarism
balance of power
armistice
propaganda
enemy aliens
profiteering
conscription

Looking Ahead

The following inquiry questions will help you explore how Canada responded to World War I:

- Why did Canada get involved in World War I?
- How did Canadian military forces meet the challenge of war?
- How did Canadians at home respond to the war?










LEARNING GOALS

In this chapter you will

- explain the causes of World War I
- describe Canada's participation in World War I and analyse the consequences of the country's involvement
- describe some of the major political and social conflicts at this time
- explain how specific groups and individuals contributed to Canadian society and politics

Figure 6–2 Size of Armies, August 1914*

On the basis of these figures, what was Canada's military presence in 1914? What other information might help you answer this question?

	Russia	5 971 000
	Germany	4 500 000
	France	4 017 000
	Austria-Hungary	3 000 000
	Italy	1 251 000
	Britain	975 000
	Japan	800 000
	United States	200 000
	Canada**	60 000

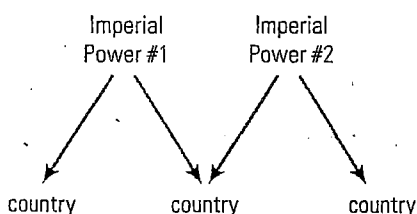
* Standing army and reserves

** Standing army 3000; reserves 57 000

Note: "Standing army" refers to full-time soldiers; "reserves" are part-time forces that can be called up in an emergency.

Figure 6–3 An Imperial Clash

Imperial powers like to control other countries. What happens when two imperial powers want to control the same country?



Why did Canada get involved in World War I?

In 1914, the population of Canada was about 7.9 million. More than three million immigrants had arrived since 1896, about a third of them from Britain. Railways linked the country from east to west, and a growing number of homes and businesses had electric power and telephones. Canada's first airplane flight had taken place in Nova Scotia, and about 50 000 Canadians drove cars.

At the same time, the gap between rich and poor was growing. Although people had jobs, many of them paid poorly. To improve their working conditions, some people were joining unions. Many First Nations people were restricted to reserves, where their rights were limited. And some women were fighting to be allowed to vote in provincial and federal elections.

The Causes of World War I

War brings violence, death, and grief. One might wonder why any country ever goes to war. But history is filled with wars. Let's look at what factors led a young country like Canada to decide in 1914 that war was the only option.

In the early 1900s, the great powers of Europe were on a collision course. Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia were in a race for power.

Imperialism

Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia were imperial powers. **Imperialism** — the policy of extending the power of one country over other countries through military force or economic control — was a source of tension as European countries tried to expand their empires. The British Empire, for example, controlled more than 25 per cent of the world's territory and people.

From their colonies, European countries imported cheap raw materials, such as minerals and lumber, to feed their factories. The colonies also served as markets where goods manufactured in the homeland were sold. This gave the European countries economic power — and led to competition for overseas colonies.

Militarism

Militarism means using a military force to defend or promote a country's interest. To protect themselves and their colonies against invasion by rival empires, some European countries spent vast sums on their armed forces.

In the years leading up to World War I, for example, Britain's navy was the largest in the world and Russia had the largest army. But Germany was racing to catch up to both.

Advances in technology had led to the development of more powerful and deadlier weapons. During this time, arms manufacturers became some of the largest companies in Europe. How might such military buildup make it more likely that war would break out?

Alliances

Countries often form alliances to strengthen their position in the world. After World War II, for example, Canada joined a defensive alliance called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO members agreed that an attack on one would be considered an attack on all.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, European countries formed similar alliances to try to maintain a **balance of power** whereby no single country can become more powerful than the rest. By 1914, conflicting imperial ambitions and the buildup of military might had created two large power blocs. The Triple Alliance included Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. The Triple Entente, or Allies, included France, Russia, and Britain.

When the European powder keg exploded and countries honoured their alliance commitments, World War I began.

Cause and Consequence: If you were a country with many neighbours, how would maintaining the “balance of power” be to your advantage? What might the disadvantages be?

Nationalism

Nationalism — excessive pride in one’s own nation — was growing in the years before World War I.

Austria-Hungary, for example, was home to 50 million Austrians, Hungarians, Bosnians, and Ukrainians, who were often hostile to one another. Many of the groups wanted their own independent countries.

The spark that ignited World War I was a political assassination in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was part of Austria-Hungary at the time. On June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary and his wife, Duchess Sophie, were shot dead while visiting the city.

The man who carried out the assassination belonged to a nationalist group in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina’s neighbour. Many Serbians lived in Bosnia-Herzegovina — and Serbian nationalists believed that they should be liberated from Austrian control and become part of Serbia.

After the assassination, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. But Russia had promised to help Serbia, and when Russian troops mobilized to do this, Germany sprang to defend its ally in the Triple Alliance. Britain and France backed Russia, their ally in the Triple Entente. And so by August 4, 1914, much of Europe was at war.

Cause and Consequence: In your opinion, were the alliances or the assassinations more responsible for starting the war?

Figure 6-4 The Triple Alliance and Triple Entente, 1914

What challenges might the Triple Alliance face based on its geographic location?



...CONNECTIONS...

The March to War, 1914

- June 28 Serbian nationalists assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary and his wife, Duchess Sophie
- July 28 Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia
- July 29 Russia responds by sending troops to borders of Austria-Hungary and Germany
- August 1 Germany declares war on Russia
- August 3 Germany declares war on France
- August 4 Germany invades Belgium en route to France
Britain declares war on Germany
Canadian government confirms that Canada, too, is at war

Figure 6–5 In September 1915, crowds waited outside City Hall in Toronto for their turn to join the army. The sign above the entrance reads, “Your king and country need you now. Welcome.” What do these words say about the basis of the appeal to sign up?



Canada Goes to War

In 1914, more than half of Canadians were of British heritage, and many thought of Britain as the “mother country.” Canada was in charge of its own internal affairs, but the British government still controlled the country’s foreign affairs — its relations with other countries.

This meant that when Britain declared war on Germany in August 1914, Canada was also at war. On the same day that Britain declared war, Prime Minister Robert Borden’s government said that Canada, too, was at war. Two weeks later, Parliament confirmed this. Sam Hughes, a member of Borden’s government and a strong supporter of British imperial rule, became responsible for mobilizing Canada’s volunteer army.

Historical Perspective: What does calling Britain the “mother country” suggest about how Canadians viewed Britain?

...CONNECTIONS...

American politicians viewed World War I as a European conflict and vowed to remain neutral. But American businesses, such as the steel industry, made huge profits by supplying war materials to the Allies. In addition, many American banks and financiers lent money to Allied governments to help fund the war effort.

Italy had been a member of the Triple Alliance, but Italian public opinion opposed going to war. Finally, in 1915, Italy entered the war — but on the side of the Allies. Allied leaders had promised Italy financial support, as well as territory controlled by Austria-Hungary.

Responses to Recruitment

When World War I began, Canada was experiencing an economic depression. Factories had closed, and unemployment was high. Two years of drought had ruined much of the Prairie wheat crop. More than 50 000 people had lost their jobs on the railways, which were deeply in debt.

Politicians like Wilfrid Laurier, the Liberal leader who had been prime minister from 1896 to 1911, urged Canadian men to enlist. Laurier said, “It is our duty . . . to let Great Britain know . . . that there is in Canada but one mind and one heart, and that all Canadians stand behind the Mother Country, conscious and proud that she . . . engaged in war . . . to save civilization from the unbridled lust of conquest and power.”

About 25 per cent of all soldiers who served in the Canadian army during the war had been born in Britain. These volunteers, who were paid \$1.10 a day, came from all walks of life. They were factory workers, doctors, labourers, farmers, lawyers, and miners. Many of them thought that the war would be over soon. They rushed to sign up, believing that they were setting out on a great adventure.

On October 3, 1914, the first 30 troop ships set sail for England carrying 32 000 Canadian and Newfoundland troops and 100 Canadian nurses. After more training in England, the troops finally arrived at the front lines near Ypres, Belgium, in the spring of 1915.

Cause and Consequence: Consider Canadian economic conditions in 1914. What factors, besides patriotism, might have motivated so many to sign up so quickly?

Not Wanted in the Armed Forces

In 1914, discrimination was common — and recruiting practices reflected the discriminatory attitudes of many Canadians. Early in the war, for example, Aboriginal people were not expected or encouraged to sign up.

But as the war dragged on, many soldiers were dying while the number of volunteers dropped. So the government started welcoming Aboriginal volunteers, who signed up in large numbers.

By the end of the war, about 35 per cent of eligible Aboriginal men — about 4000 of them — had joined the Canadian Forces. On the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation reserve, for example, all but three eligible single men enlisted.

Some Aboriginal volunteers signed up out of loyalty to the British king. He was descended from Queen Victoria, with whom First Nations had signed treaties. Others enlisted as a way of escaping the reserve system, which restricted their rights. Ironically, though, in order for Aboriginal men to enlist, they had to relinquish their Aboriginal rights and status.

Many Black Canadians also tried to enlist, but most were rejected by the white officers who ran the recruiting stations. Eventually, in 1916, Black volunteers were recruited to join a segregated, non-combat construction battalion. Their job was to dig trenches, load ammunition, cut down trees, and lay railway tracks.

Asian volunteers were also turned away. Canadians of German heritage, as well as many who came from Ukraine, were rejected because their former homelands were at war with Britain.

Women's Roles

Women were not allowed to sign on as soldiers, sailors, or pilots. But more than 3000 Canadian women enlisted as nurses. These were the first women to officially serve in the Canadian Armed Forces. They took care of wounded and dying soldiers in field hospitals, often within a few kilometres of the front lines. They also served in hospitals in Britain and France.

Nursing near the front lines was dangerous. Many medical staff were wounded or killed when hospitals came under fire. In addition, the risk of picking up an infection or disease was high.

Further, about 1000 Canadian women served as drivers in the air force. Others volunteered to drive ambulances and take on other jobs with the Red Cross.



Figure 6-6 The musical band of the No. 2 Construction Battalion in 1916. This battalion was formed as a result of lobbying by Black Canadians, and some members went on to fight in regular army units. Why would Black Canadians be assigned to an all-Black battalion? Would that be acceptable today?

Figure 6-7 These nurses were photographed in Winnipeg in 1915, just before they left to serve in Europe. Nurses were automatically given officer status. Would it be tougher to be a man or a woman in the armed forces at that time? Why?



Recall... Reflect... Respond

1. Could the Canadian government have responded differently to the outbreak of war? Explain your judgment.
2. On the basis of your knowledge of who was welcomed into the armed forces, describe the barriers faced by many groups in Canada during World War I.
3. Create a web diagram to illustrate all the causes of World War I. Include both long-term conditions and short-term causes. Show which causes are related to others. Explain your connections.

How did Canadian military forces meet the challenge of war?

Voices

The whole of West Flanders [now Belgium] is one large, steaming pot, in which death and devastation are brewing. With the sun smiling its brightest at us, terrific, never-ending thunderstorms are raging over the land. Amid noises such as the old earth never heard before, a crop of new battles and new wars between nations is growing to maturity.

— Max Osborn, German observer
at Ypres, on the artillery destruction
on July 31, 1917

As we consider how Canadian forces responded to the violence of war, we should think about what exactly they faced. By the early 1900s, industrialization and new technology had changed not only the way many people lived but also how war was waged. Weapons were more deadly and could be manufactured more quickly than in the past. Inventions such as the internal combustion engine led to the development of tanks, armoured vehicles, and the trucks that transported soldiers and supplies to the front lines.

Weapons of War

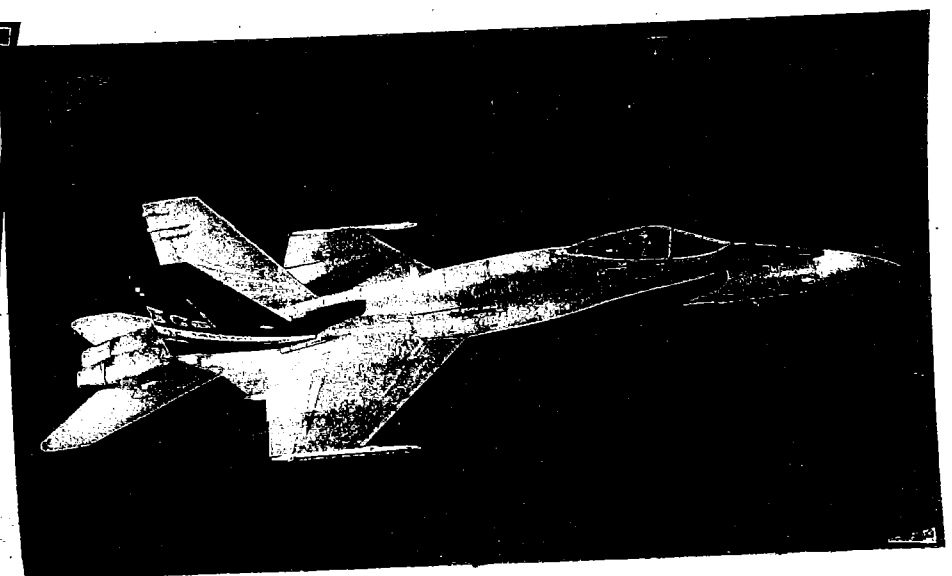
The course of the war depended hugely on whether the Allies or the Central Powers could discover and put to use ever-more deadly technologies before the other could.

By 1914, Germany and Britain had both developed diesel-powered submarines armed with torpedoes to fire at unsuspecting ships. Submarines were effective weapons, and by 1918 German subs had sunk 2600 Allied military and civilian ships. In response, the Allies developed anti-submarine destroyers. These fast-moving ships carried equipment that could detect submarines and drop on them depth charges — bombs that exploded underwater.

Tanks — armoured vehicles with heavy metal tracks instead of wheels — were developed by the British using the same technology as bulldozers. Tanks were designed to cross trenches and plow through barbed wire and other obstacles. Their thick metal armour protected the tank drivers.

At the beginning of the war, airplanes were used mainly to observe and photograph enemy territory. But the Germans and the British eventually developed technology that allowed machine guns to be mounted on the planes and fired between the rotating propeller blades. Later in the war, aircraft were developed to carry bombs.

Figure 6–8 The painting to the left shows two World War I fighter planes in a dogfight. The photo to the right shows a CF-18 Hornet, used by the Canadian air force today. How have advances in airplane technology changed the face of war?



How a Gun Changed a War

In 1914, Allied military leaders had been trained in 19th-century battle tactics. They still believed that battles would be won by two armies fighting on an open field. In such close contact, a rifle with a bayonet is an excellent weapon but only if both sides have similar weapons.

The British and French commanders were unsure of the effectiveness of a new weapon — the machine gun — because it jammed and got overheated. These guns were very heavy and required four to six operators. So the Allies issued only two machine guns per battalion.

German commanders had a lot more confidence in the new machine guns, so they stockpiled thousands of them. They placed them right at the front of their lines, where they could shoot down attackers from a distance. These weapons fired shells filled with

deadly shrapnel, and they could shoot 600 rounds of ammunition a minute.

Consequently, Allied soldiers were at a hopeless disadvantage. When their commanders ordered them to attack, they were shot down long before they got close enough to the enemy to be a threat.

Even after the Allied forces were armed with powerful machine guns, neither side could make advances because both sides had machine guns to defend their positions. War became a kind of stalemate.

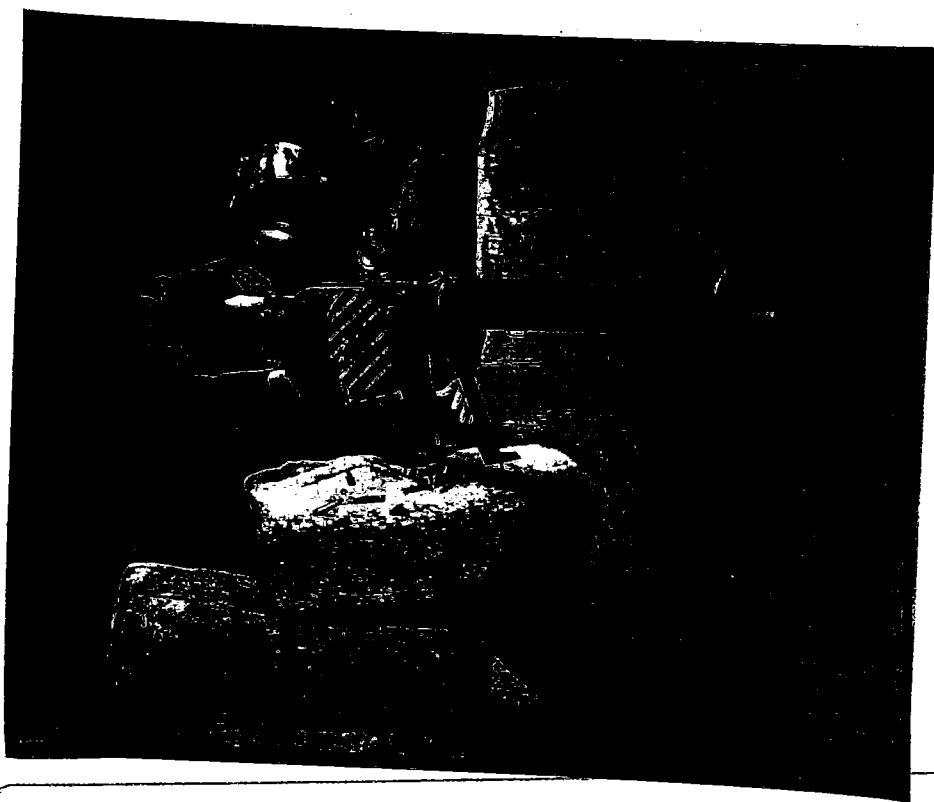


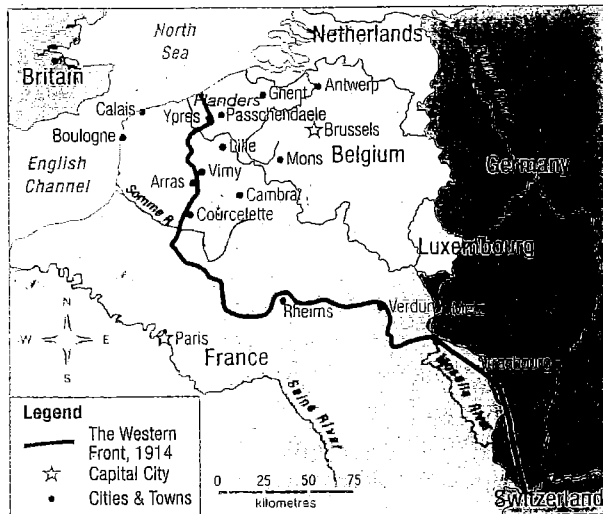
Figure 6-9 At the beginning of the Battle of the Somme, German machine guns like this Maschinengewehr 08 killed thousands of attacking Allied troops within just a few minutes.

Explorations

1. How did the invention and use of machine guns affect how World War I was fought? What impact did it have on the lives of soldiers? On the lives of Canadians at home? What does its use reveal about the changing nature of war?
2. We can get a better understanding of the historical significance of a development by asking a "What if . . ." question. What if the machine gun had never been invented? What deep consequences for many people would not have resulted?

Figure 6–10 The Western Front, 1914

Trenches ran 708 kilometres along the Western Front, from the Swiss border to the North Sea. How might the trenches have actually made it harder to end the war?



Trench Warfare

After the Germans' initial rapid push through Belgium and into France, the Allies stopped them in late 1914. This resulted in a stalemate (where neither side can move), and from then on, the Western Front did not change much. To protect themselves from artillery and machine gun fire, soldiers on both sides dug trenches deep enough to shelter a man standing up.

So, when the first Canadian troops arrived at Ypres in 1915, they found themselves digging — and living in — trenches. Over the years, the trenches grew into a maze of underground rooms and tunnels. Some tunnels were dug toward enemy lines so that listeners could eavesdrop and sappers could plant explosives to blow up enemy trenches.

Despite the new machine guns and artillery, British and French commanders stuck to outdated tactics. They continued ordering soldiers to go “over the top” of the trenches and attack. But to reach enemy lines, the soldiers had to cross no man’s land — the area between the Allied and German trenches. In no man’s land, Allied soldiers had little protection against enemy artillery and machine gun fire, and hundreds of thousands died.

Cause and Consequence: Examine the map in Figure 6–10. It shows the 708-kilometre Western Front, which stretched from the Swiss border to the North Sea. How might this long line of trenches have contributed to the stalemate between the warring sides?

Life in the Trenches

Life in the trenches was miserable and dangerous.

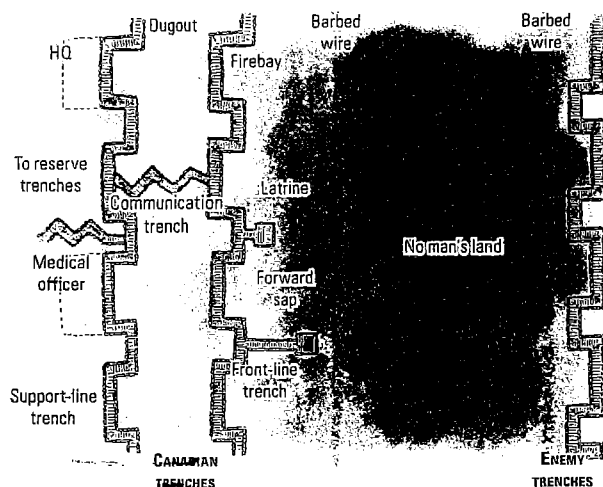
Depending on the season, soldiers endured bone-chilling cold, unbearable heat, or constant rain and mud. Their uniforms were filthy and infested with lice. Rats were everywhere. Diseases such as trench foot were common. Trench foot, which rotted the flesh of the feet, was caused by standing in mud and water. If the infection spread, a soldier’s foot and leg might need to be amputated.

Fear was constant. Soldiers never knew when the enemy might stage a surprise raid or an all-out attack. Even between battles, troops were not safe. Snipers on both sides tried to shoot enemy soldiers, and each army tried to lob shells and grenades into the other’s trenches.

Evidence: We know that conditions were dreadful in the trenches. Yet Canadian soldiers stayed and continued the fight. What can you infer from this?

Figure 6–11 The Trench System

When the trenches filled with rain water, would the soldiers stay in their trenches or climb out? Why?



The War at Sea

Both Britain and Germany relied on ships to supply food, raw materials, medical equipment, soldiers, and weapons. So each side used its navy to sink as many of the enemy's supply ships as possible.

When the war began, Germany had more submarines than Britain. The Germans called their submarines U-boats, which stood for *Unterseebooten* (underwater boats). To cut off the Allies' supplies, U-boats began to attack ships bound for Britain.

To counter this threat, the Allies set up convoys. Merchant ships gathered at Halifax, Nova Scotia, and travelled in packs with naval escorts to detect and sink U-boats. Once the convoy system was in place, fewer ships were lost. Still, 45 Canadian steamships were among the 2600 Allied ships sunk by U-boats.

In 1915, a U-boat torpedoed the *Lusitania*, a British passenger liner that was also carrying war supplies to Britain. More than half the passengers, including 128 Americans, went down with the ship. This incident, and the sinking of two more American ships in 1917, is often credited with helping shift American public opinion in favour of joining the Allies. However, historians disagree on how significant the incident was because the United States did not enter the war until April 1917.

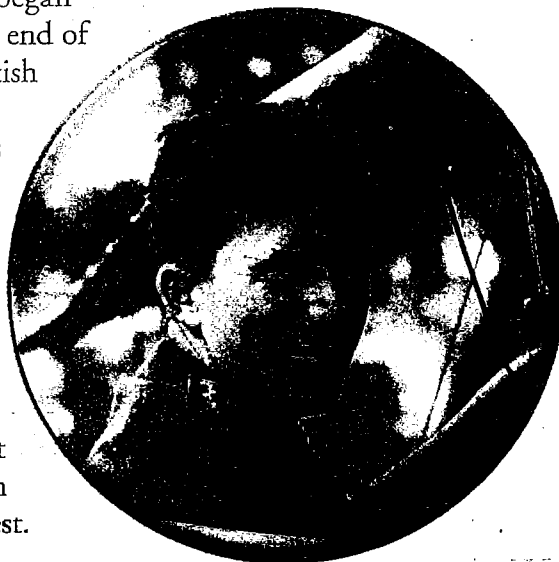
World War I helped speed the growth of the Canadian navy. When the war started, Canada's navy consisted of two second-hand cruisers. By 1918, this number had grown to more than 100 ships, including cruisers, destroyers, submarines, trawlers, and minesweepers. These ships escorted convoys across the Atlantic, bringing much needed arms and supplies. What would it take to ramp up from two to 100 ships?

The War in the Air

When World War I began, Canada had no air force, so would-be aviators joined the British Royal Flying Corps or the Royal Naval Air Service. About 22 800 Canadians served as pilots, gunners, mechanics, and aircrew. During the war, Britain began training pilots in Canada. By the end of the war, about 40 per cent of British pilots were Canadian.

Flying the early airplanes was dangerous. Their open cockpits offered little protection, and pilots often flew low over enemy lines to take pictures, gather information, drop bombs, and fire at enemy soldiers.

Fighter pilots who shot down five or more enemy aircraft became known as aces. Canadian Billy Bishop was one of the bravest.



TAKE UP THE SWORD OF JUSTICE



Figure 6-12 British artist Bernard Partridge created this poster, which shows people drowning as the *Lusitania* sinks. What does the figure of the woman represent? What feelings might this poster have been calculated to stir? How effective is it?

CONNECTIONS

More than 50 000 Allied pilots and aircrew died during World War I. Once pilots started active service, they could expect to live about three weeks. As a result, the air corps was nicknamed the "suicide service" and planes were called "flying coffins."

Figure 6-13 By the time he was 24 years old, Billy Bishop of Owen Sound, Ontario, was the top Allied flying ace. He often went on "unofficial" solo missions deep into enemy territory where he could launch surprise attacks on the Germans. How would you describe his response to war?

Figure 6–14 Although warfare was becoming more mechanized, horses were still useful on the battlefield. So both sides developed gas masks to protect horses from poison gas. Would the Canadian army use horses in battle today? Why or why not?



Up for Discussion

The use of poison gas in warfare was banned by international agreement in 1925. Does setting rules for waging war make sense?

Voices

We are so busy here that we scarcely know where to turn. It is just a procession of wounded coming and going all the time, for we have to send them off as quickly as possible in order to make room for the new arrivals.

— Agnes Warner, Canadian nurse at the Somme, in a letter home, 1916

A New Kind of War

When Canadian troops first arrived in Europe, they remained together in their division. But as more divisions arrived, the divisions were separated and integrated into the British army.

Soon after arriving in Europe, Canadian soldiers were sent to help French and British troops near Ypres, Belgium. There, in April 1915, the Germans unleashed a deadly new weapon: chlorine gas. This gas burned the eyes and lungs, causing victims to choke, gag, and suffocate to death.

When the French front line at Ypres was hit hard by the gas, Canadian troops moved in as reinforcements. At first, the Germans pushed the Canadians back, but then the line held. The German advance was stopped, but the Canadians suffered more than 6000 casualties.

Both sides launched gas attacks during the war — and both sides began equipping their troops with gas masks. In the end, however, these attacks were not as effective as had been hoped. The gas usually dispersed quickly, and if the wind changed, a gas attack could backfire and harm the troops who had started the attack.

The Battle of the Somme

General Douglas Haig, the British commander, believed the Allied forces could break through the German lines at a location on the Somme River. This action would help stop German troops from bombarding the French near Verdun.

For two weeks, Allied artillery bombarded the German line along a 45-kilometre front. Haig wanted to destroy the German trenches and the barbed wire that protected them. But the tactic failed.

When British and Canadian troops started moving across no man's land on July 1, 1916, they found the barbed wire intact and the Germans with machine guns ready. Also taking part was the Newfoundland Regiment, which was not linked to the Canadian Army because Newfoundland had not yet joined Confederation. The Newfoundlanders attacked at Beaumont-Hamel at the northern end of the front — and suffered terrible casualties. Of the nearly 800 men who went over the top at Beaumont-Hamel, only 68 were able to report for duty the next morning.

Although the Allied force suffered 60 000 casualties on that first day, Haig ordered the attack to continue. And it did, for more than four months. When the battle finally ended in November 1916, the Allies had suffered about 650 000 casualties to gain just 545 square kilometres of territory. For good reason, this battle is sometimes called the bloodiest battle in human history. Among the casualties were 24 000 Canadians.

Continuity and Change: Compare the number of dead to the number of Canadians killed in Canada's decade-long war in Afghanistan. What has changed and what has stayed the same?

The Battle of Vimy Ridge

By early 1917, both British and French forces had tried — unsuccessfully — to take a German stronghold on Vimy Ridge in northern France. This height of land was considered a key vantage point, and for their third attempt to capture it, the Allies turned to the Canadians. For the first time, Canada's four divisions were assembled to fight as a single unit under a Canadian commander, Major-General Arthur Currie.

The slaughter at the Somme had ended just a few months earlier, and it had taught the Allied commanders some important lessons. They began to change their tactics.

One strategy they adopted was the creeping barrage. From behind the front line, artillery would start bombarding no man's land and gradually advance their salvos toward the German trenches. Infantry would follow this creeping barrage forward, moving as close as possible to enemy positions before starting their attack.

Currie and his superior, British Lieutenant-General Julian Byng, spent the weeks before the attack making detailed plans. Soldiers were shown maps and aerial photographs and drilled on the location of German positions. Troops practised, using scale models. Tunnels were built so that troops could move part of the way forward under cover.

Then, for two weeks, artillery pummelled the German lines. The attack started at 5:30 a.m. on Monday, April 9, 1917, the day after Easter Sunday. As snow fell, the first wave of 20 000 Canadians followed a carefully co-ordinated creeping barrage toward the ridge.

Once on the move, the Canadians were required to reach specific points at precise times; otherwise, they risked being caught in their own bombardment. Machine guns were carried forward behind the first wave to hold positions that had been captured.

The careful preparation paid off. By the next day, the Canadians had taken and held Vimy Ridge. Coming on the heels of the disaster at the Somme, this important victory gave the Allies new hope.

After the battle, a Paris newspaper called the victory "Canada's Easter gift to France." And after the war, France gave the battlefield to Canada as a memorial park. On the memorial are inscribed the names of 11 285 Canadian soldiers who died in France but whose bodies were never found.



Figure 6-15 Canadian soldiers go over the top. When the order to attack was given, soldiers would leave the relative safety of the trenches and advance through no man's land — with bayonets at the ready for hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. Would it be easier going over the top knowing that a Canadian was giving the order?

Figure 6-16 A sculpted figure at the Vimy Memorial looks toward the battlefield the Canadians had to cross. The sculpture — and the rest of the memorial — sits at the top of the ridge that the Germans chose as a stronghold. What evidence in the photograph shows you what made it a good defensive position?

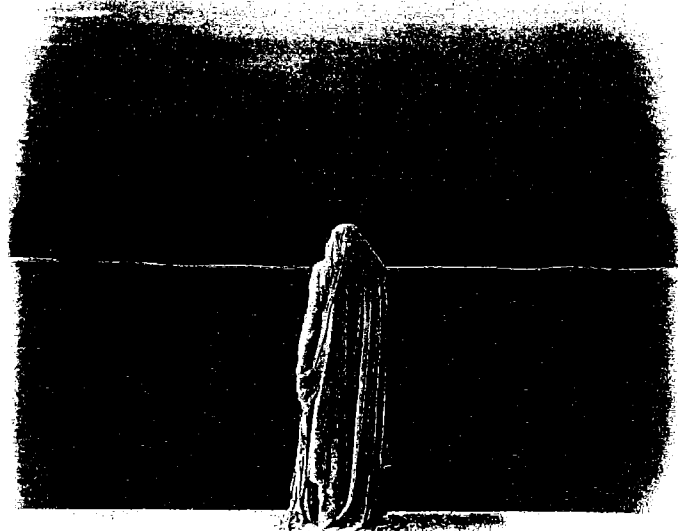


Figure 6–17 News of the Canadian victory at Vimy was trumpeted on the front pages of newspapers across Canada. How might Canadians respond to reading these headlines?



Vimy and Canadian Identity

Many historians view the success at Vimy as a turning point in Canada's history as a nation. The achievement gave many Canadians a new sense of national pride and identity.

Historian C.P. Stacey, for example, wrote: "As [the Canadian soldiers] looked across the Douai plain from the conquered ridge they felt that their nation had come of age. If a single milestone is needed to mark progress on the road to national maturity, one might do worse than nominate that famous Easter Monday."

Historical Perspective: Stacey takes the historical perspective of the victorious soldiers at Vimy. What do you think most affected Canadian identity in the long run: the thoughts of Canadian soldiers after Vimy, as Stacey describes them, or the newspaper headlines at left?

Youth Making History

Remembering Vimy

It was a typical school assignment: Pick the name of a soldier who had died in World War I, and research him.

But by the time high school student Robert Sweeney of R.D. Parker Collegiate School in Thompson, Manitoba, had arrived in Vimy Ridge on April 9, 2012, to mark the battle's 95th anniversary, he had a new understanding of the project.

His soldier's name was Robert Richardson.

"He was just 25 years old," Robert said, placing his hand on the memorial etched with Richardson's name, along with the names of more than 11 000 Canadian soldiers killed in France who were never found. "He never had a grave. They never found his body."

"I just wanted to be here, to touch the wall, and let him know that he's not alone," he said under darkened



Figure 6–18 Robert Sweeney stands beside Robert Richardson's name at the Vimy Ridge monument. If you had been Robert, what might you be thinking?

skies and drizzling rain. "I'm so glad I'm here, so that someone knows he fought in the battle."

Sweeney, along with 5000 other students, travelled to Vimy as part of the 2012 Vimy Ridge National Student Remembrance Tour. The students visited a number of key sites, including Beaumont-Hamel, France, where the Newfoundland regiment suffered massive casualties (see page 182).

Explorations

1. Is a monument like the Vimy Memorial an appropriate way to remember those who died in battle? Consider the role that a permanent structure can play for future generations. What other form of remembrance would help young people understand the importance of this battle to Canadian identity?
2. Most Canadians who died in World War I are buried far from home in Europe. During the War in Afghanistan, the bodies of Canadian soldiers who died in Afghanistan were flown home to Canada. How does this shift reflect technological change? How does it reflect changes in social values and expectations?

The Battle of Passchendaele

In early 1917, Haig had ordered Allied troops to try to break through the German lines near Ypres, Belgium. This battle became known as the Third Battle of Ypres. The Battle of Passchendaele was part of this larger battle.

The Germans had held the line at Ypres since 1914, giving them plenty of time to reinforce their defences and build concrete bunkers to protect machine gun crews.

Through the summer of 1917, constant shelling and heavy rains turned no man's land into a muddy swamp pocked with deep, water-filled craters. British, Australian, and New Zealand forces tried to attack the German positions with little success, and at a cost of 100 000 casualties.

Since Vimy, the Canadian Forces had remained together under Arthur Currie, who had been promoted to lieutenant-general. When Haig ordered Currie and the Canadians to take Passchendaele Ridge, Currie feared that losses would be heavy and once again planned carefully.

Scouts were sent out to report the position of German machine gun and artillery placements. Soldiers were drilled in the location of German positions, and they rehearsed before the battle. And, once again, a creeping barrage was planned to provide cover for soldiers making their way across no man's land.

On October 26, the artillery barrages that preceded the attack could be heard in London, England, 150 kilometres away. The Canadians attacked behind the barrage but were slowed by the mud and heavy rain. Over the next 15 days, the attack continued.

On November 10, the Canadians captured the ridge, but 15 654 soldiers were dead or wounded. Despite this victory, the Third Battle of Ypres, which resulted in more than 310 000 Allied and 260 000 German casualties, resulted in little significant gain. For many historians, Passchendaele has come to symbolize the futility of World War I.

Historical Perspective: Historian Ronald Haycock once said about the Canadian effort at Passchendaele: "The competence, confidence, and maturity begun in 1915 at Ypres a short distance away, and at Vimy Ridge earlier that spring, again confirmed the reputation of the Canadian Corps as the finest fighting formation on the Western Front." On the other hand, Major John R. Grodzinski has said, "The notion of soldiers coming down Vimy Ridge as Canadians was not expressed in 1917, but it was fabricated by a series of leading questions directed to Great War veterans during the 1960s." In other words, the meaning of Vimy was created after the war, once people had a chance to talk about it. Summarize these two viewpoints. What do these viewpoints tell you about "truth" in history?

Voices

The first day I went in, the mud was six inches deep everywhere, and in most places halfway up to my knees. The surrounding country was literally shot to pieces, looking like a field after trees and stumps have been pulled out, except that the holes are as deep as 10 feet [3 metres] and filled with water. The lips of one shell hole practically touch the lips of another.

— Robert Massie, Canadian artillery officer, recalling Passchendaele in 1918

Figure 6-19 A few days after the Battle of Passchendaele, Canadian machine gunners take shelter in craters created by artillery fire. Write a sentence or two to describe what these soldiers might have been feeling.



"In Flanders Fields"

Taking an historical perspective means looking through the eyes of people who experienced the past. The historian uses evidence to do that. We know, for example, that in 1914, Canadians were calling World War I the "Great War." This one little piece of evidence helps us see what Canadians at that time thought about the war.

Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae took the perspective of the war dead in his poem "In Flanders Fields." A doctor from Guelph, Ontario, McCrae had signed up at the beginning of the war and worked as a field surgeon right behind the front lines. That meant he saw the worst injuries and many deaths. On May 2, 1915, McCrae had been stationed near Ypres, Belgium, for two weeks. While the Battle of Ypres raged, one of McCrae's closest friends and former students, Lieutenant Alexis Helmer of Ottawa, was killed by an enemy shell.

The next day, after having buried his friend, McCrae sat on the back of an ambulance, quietly thinking and jotting in a notebook. He wrote, he looked towards his friend's grave, and he wrote again.

McCrae did not write in his own voice. He took the perspective of Helmer and the other soldiers who had given their lives for their country. He wrote of what they would expect of their fellow soldiers and fellow citizens.

After two and a half more years of war, John McCrae died of pneumonia and meningitis in a war hospital.

In Flanders Fields

By John McCrae, 1915

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago

We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:

To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.

If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

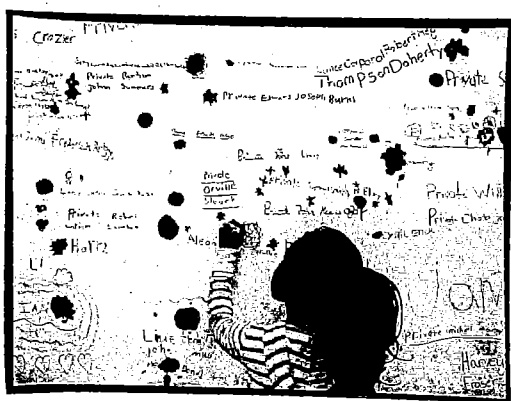


Figure 6-20 John McCrae's poem was soon published and became the most popular poem of the war. It encouraged people to support the war. Eventually, it inspired people to embrace the poppy as the symbol of remembrance. Left, Grade 4 student Joelle Bennett, in Brampton, Ontario, is surrounded by poppies on a Remembrance Day banner. What does the poppy symbol help people to remember?

Explorations

1. Take the historical perspective of McCrae by making inferences about what he thought and felt about the death of his friend Helmer. Consider what you know of the relationship, the historical context of the battlefield, and what McCrae did in response.
2. How did Anglophone Canadians in 1915, in the midst of a war, respond to the third stanza? How is your response different as you read the poem in the 21st century? How does our awareness of this difference help us to understand the people of 1915?

Canada's Hundred Days

Before the war ended, Canadians would meet another daunting challenge. In 1917, a communist revolution in Russia had deposed the czar, or emperor, and Russia surrendered to Germany early in 1918. This enabled Germany to transfer 600 000 German soldiers from Russia to the Western Front. But the Allied forces were also becoming stronger. The United States had entered the war in late 1917, so fresh American troops were arriving in Europe.

Hoping to attack before the Allies were at full strength, German commanders launched a major offensive on the Western Front. But the Allies were ready — and on August 8, 1918, a period now known as “Canada’s Hundred Days” began.

On that date, the Canadian Corps, still led by Currie, spearheaded an attack on the city of Amiens. By the end of the day, they had pushed the Germans back 13 kilometres. In a war in which success was often measured in metres, this achievement was astonishing, and some historians say that it marked the beginning of the end for Germany.

The Canadians kept pushing forward. By early September, they had reached the Canal du Nord. As at Vimy and Passchendaele, Currie and Canadian officers carefully planned their strategy for crossing this heavily defended landmark. Transport, labour, communications, medical, and engineering units were brought into the planning.

On September 27, the Canadians attacked, with the support of a huge artillery barrage. The engineers quickly built bridges and ladders, often under German machine gun fire. Within hours, the Canadians had opened a route across the canal for the guns, tanks, and supplies that would be needed as the Allies pushed forward.

By October 11, the Canadians had taken the town of Cambrai and advanced 37 kilometres into what had been German-held territory.

In the final days of the war, the Canadians pushed on through Valenciennes to the Belgian city of Mons, which had been in German hands since early in the war. Late on November 10, Canadians moved into Mons.

At the same time, an **armistice** — truce — was being negotiated, and at 11 a.m. on November 11, the armistice became official and the fighting ended.

Historical Perspective: Why would people who lived through World War I call it “the war to end all wars”? Has time changed our perspective?

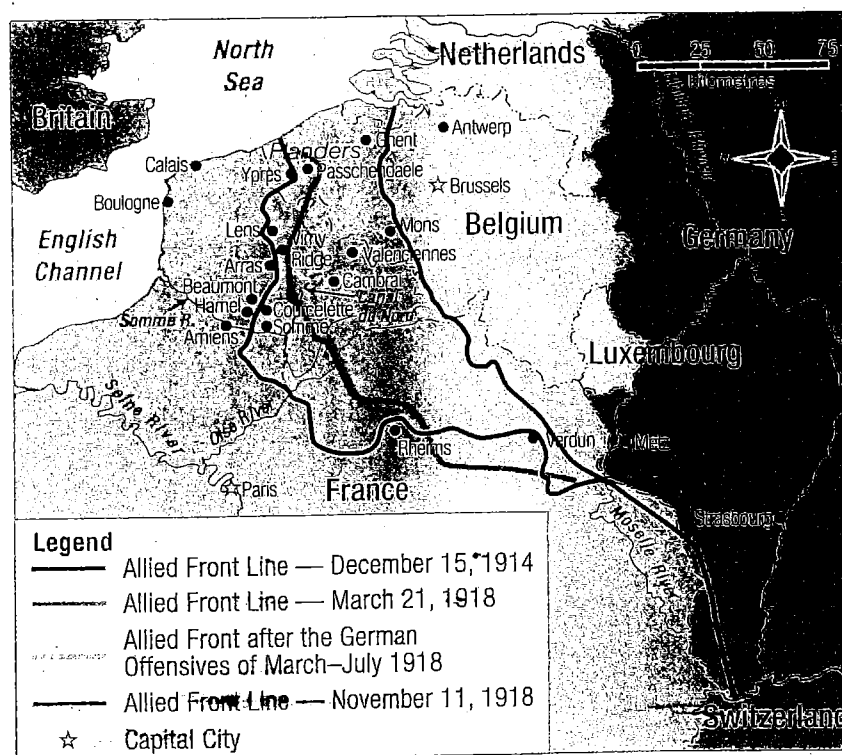
Voices

The battle for the Canal du Nord was arguably the single greatest achievement of the Canadian Corps. An all but impregnable position had been taken, thanks to an imaginative plan, almost flawless execution, massive fire support, and the matchless courage of the Canadian soldiers.

— J.L. Granatstein, historian, in *Hell’s Corner: An Illustrated History of Canada’s Great War, 1914–1918*, 2004

Figure 6–21 Land Exchanged During World War I

Note the amount of territory that changed hands over the four years of war. Consider this in relation to the number of lives lost. Was it all worth it?



Canada at the Paris Peace Conference

In 1919, representatives of the countries that won the war met in Paris, France, to negotiate the treaties that would officially end the war. Although Britain still controlled Canada's foreign policy, Prime Minister Robert Borden argued that Canadians' wartime record had earned Canada the right to sit independently at the peace table. And when the time came to sign the treaties, Canada did so separately from Britain.

Still, Prime Minister David Lloyd George of Britain, Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau of France, and President Woodrow Wilson of the United States were the driving forces behind many of the treaty decisions that would have far-reaching consequences in the decades to come.

The Treaty of Versailles between the Allies and the Central Powers imposed harsh financial, military, and territorial penalties on Germany. The treaty forced Germany

- to give up some European territory and its overseas colonies, such as present-day Namibia in Africa and Jiaozhou Territory in China.
- to limit the size of its military and stop manufacturing large armaments
- to pay for the cost of the war and to compensate those countries that had been severely damaged
- to accept responsibility “for causing all the loss and damage” of the war

Ethical Dimension: Why would the Allies insist on placing all blame for the war on Germany? Given the situation in Europe before the war, was this fair?

Figure 6–22 World War I by the Numbers

Which statistic stands out? What consequences might result?

Total estimated military deaths: 8 300 000
Total disabled for life: 7 000 000
Total civilian deaths: 8 000 000
Total Canadians enlisted: 600 000
Total Canadian military deaths: 60 400
Total Canadians wounded: 155 800

← Check Back

You read about some of the long-term consequences of France and Britain's decision to create Iraq and control its oil in Chapter 5.

Consequences Around The World

Before World War I, many Arabs in the Ottoman Empire wanted an independent homeland. Although the Ottoman Empire, which was ruled by Turks, was an ally of Germany during the war, many Arabs in the empire helped the Allies — and were promised a homeland in return.

But during the war, Britain promised to help Jews establish a “national home” in Palestine, and France and Britain secretly agreed to divide control of the Middle East — and its oil wealth — between themselves.

At the end of the war, France took control of Syria and Lebanon, while Britain took control of Cyprus, Palestine, and Iraq. Iraq was a new country that the Allies carved out of the former Ottoman Empire.

Many Arabs felt betrayed by these actions, and their sense of betrayal sparked a lasting legacy of bitterness against the Western powers.

Recall ... Reflect ... Respond

1. Identify the three World War I events that you think are most historically significant for Canada and Canadians. Explain how these events affected
 - Canada's reputation in the world
 - Canadians' sense of identity
 - Canada's increasing independence
2. Canada's independent seat at the Paris Peace Conference came at a very high price. Did this seat make the sacrifices of Canadians during the war worthwhile? Write a paragraph that sets out your reasoned response to this question.

How did Canadians at home respond to the war?

During the war, about 75 per cent of Canada's 7.9 million people were in uniform. But millions of Canadians at home also supported the war effort. They contributed money, physical resources, and moral support.

Financing the War Effort

To fight the war, the Canadian government needed money to train, transport, feed, equip, and pay soldiers, and to build ships, armoured vehicles, airplanes, and weapons. At its height, the war effort was costing the government about \$1 million a day.

To raise money, the government sold Victory Bonds. People who bought these bonds were lending money to the government. In return, they would get their money back, along with interest. Buying bonds was voluntary, so the government launched advertising campaigns that appealed to Canadians' patriotism. The first bond drive, which was expected to raise \$50 million, raised more than \$100 million. What does this tell you about Canadians' initial view of the war?

The government also instituted business taxes in 1916 and introduced a tax on income in 1917. The income tax was supposed to be a temporary measure that would end when the war was over. But it is still in place.

Historical Perspective: With a partner, imagine that it is 1917 and you are preparing a speech to make at a community town hall meeting. Develop several points you could use to argue in favour of — or against — introducing an income tax to help raise money for the war effort.

Propaganda

Propaganda is the systematic effort to shape people's beliefs to achieve specific goals. During the war, Prime Minister Robert Borden's government used propaganda to keep Canadian patriotism at a high pitch. Posters played a key role in this effort. Posters were used to encourage Canadians to buy war bonds, enlist, work harder, and even change their eating habits so food could be sent overseas.

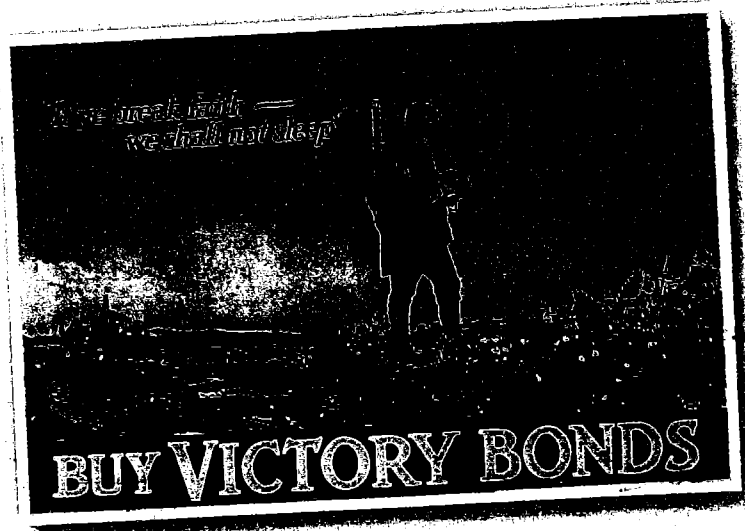
Artists were hired to develop the most effective images for the posters, which focused on duty to the country, protecting loved ones, and defeating the enemy. Billboards, parades, and rallies were used to make sure that the message reached Canadians in all parts of the country.

Propaganda also has a negative side. Some posters promoted hatred of the people of enemy countries and shamed Canadians who did not seem to be doing their share.

CONNECTIONS

Fighting World War I cost the Canadian government more than \$1.6 billion — at a time when the average Canadian family income was less than \$800 a year. Today, experts estimate that Canada spent as much as \$18.5 billion in the war in Afghanistan — at a time when the average family income was more than \$70 000.

Figure 6-23 Posters like this one, which quotes two lines from the poem "In Flanders Field" by John McCrae (see p. 186), appealed to Canadians' sense of duty and patriotism. How did the artist combine visual elements and words to appeal to the intended audience?



Check Forward ➔

You will read more about the War Measures Act in Chapter 15.

The War Measures Act

In 1914, the Canadian government passed the War Measures Act to help it respond to the war. The act gave the government the power to pass laws without the approval of Parliament while Canada was at war. It could also overrule provincial laws, censor the news media, tell manufacturers and farmers what they must produce, imprison people without trial, and label some people enemies of Canada.



Figure 6–24 The Castle Mountain Internment Camp in Alberta was one of many similar camps across Canada. Most of those interned in Castle Mountain were Ukrainians. What details in the photograph tell you about conditions at Castle Mountain?

Up for Discussion

Is suspending people's rights a reasonable response to war?

Enemy Aliens

In the years before World War I, the Canadian government had actively campaigned to attract immigrants from Europe. This meant that, by 1914, more than a million people from regions that were part of the German and Austro-Hungarian empires lived in Canada. Some were recent immigrants, but others were descended from immigrants who had arrived long before.

Some people feared that these immigrants could become spies who might sabotage the war effort. As a result, the government used the power of the War Measures Act to label more than 800 000 people **enemy aliens** — people who had come from an enemy country — and to restrict their rights.

Many so-called enemy aliens were forced to carry identification cards and report regularly

to authorities. They were not allowed to publish or read anything in a language other than French or English, and they could not leave the country without permission.

More than 8500 people, mostly of Ukrainian and German heritage, were placed in internment camps and forced to build roads and railways, work in mines, and clear land. The internees at Castle Mountain Internment Camp in Alberta, for example, helped develop Banff National Park.

At the time, the 400 000 Canadians of German heritage were the third-largest ethnic group in Canada, after the English and French. But schools and universities were not allowed to teach the German language, German-language newspapers were banned, and some German Canadians were fired from their jobs. In Montréal and Winnipeg, rioters destroyed German-owned shops, and the town of Berlin, Ontario, renamed itself Kitchener, after Britain's war minister, who had died when his ship hit a German mine.

Historical Perspective: Despite their treatment, thousands of Canadians of Ukrainian and German heritage enlisted in the Canadian Forces. Think about Canadian identity and nationhood, and explain what might have motivated them to respond to their situation by signing up.

The War Zone Comes Home

Halifax was a busy port during World War I. On the morning of December 6, 1917, two ships, the *Mont-Blanc* and the *Imo*, collided in the harbour. The *Mont-Blanc* was loaded with about 2400 tonnes of explosives and began to burn.

Just before 9:05 a.m., the *Mont-Blanc* blew up. The massive explosion flattened much of the city and was heard more than 300 kilometres away. Two thousand people died and 9000 were injured. Thousands more were left homeless. The explosion brought the horrors of war to the home front.

Women's Changing Roles

In 1914, many women worked outside the home, but their job choices were often limited. Ideas about appropriate work for women restricted many to low-paying jobs, such as teaching, domestic work, and low-skilled factory work.

But when men signed up, many more women stepped in and ran their family farms and businesses. And when the war effort needed workers to make the supplies, ships, tanks, bombs, guns, and ammunition the Canadian forces needed, women accepted these jobs.

Conditions were not easy for these women. At first, labour unions resisted because they wanted to protect jobs for men. Many women found themselves doing the same jobs as men for a fraction of the pay.

Most employers did little to help women employees. Sometimes, not even separate washrooms were provided. In addition, working conditions were sometimes dangerous. In munitions factories, for example, fumes from the materials could damage workers' lungs and turn their skin bright yellow. Accidental explosions were also a risk.

Women's new jobs were often considered temporary. When the men returned from Europe, they would take back their jobs. But many women would no longer be satisfied to play only their traditional roles as wives, mothers, and domestic workers.

Ethical Dimension: Was it fair that women — productive workers during the war — were removed from their jobs because men had returned from the battlefield? Explain your viewpoint.

Women and the Right to Vote

In 1914, voting was not considered a right for everyone. Some Canadian women, for example, could vote in municipal elections, but they were not allowed to vote in provincial or federal elections.

Women had been fighting to change this since the early 1870s. In the early 20th century, this cause was taken up by women such as Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy.

In 1916, the Manitoba government gave some women the right to vote in provincial elections, and, by 1917, women in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia could also vote in provincial elections. But it would take a wartime conscription crisis in 1917 to get them the federal vote.

Figure 6–25 Nellie McClung fought for women's rights, including the right to vote. In 1921, she was elected to the Alberta legislature, where she continued to champion the cause of women. Without feminists like McClung, what would Canada be like today?



Figure 6–26 Canadian Enlistments and Casualties, 1917

Think about the battles Canadian troops were involved in during 1917. Why might enlistments have spiked in May and June? Why would casualties have been higher in April, May, and November?

Month	Enlistments	Casualties
January	9194	4396
February	6809	1250
March	6640	6161
April	5530	13 477
May	6407	13 457
June	6348	7931
July	3882	7906
August	3117	13 232
September	5588	10 990
October	4884	5929
November	4019	30 741
December	3921	7476
TOTAL	62 810	95 246

Voices

It has often been wondered why the people of Québec have not volunteered in large numbers. I am sure that not one man in the province of Québec has any relatives native of France. . . . I think it may be truthfully said on the other hand that there is not an English-speaking family in Canada which cannot claim relatives in Great Britain.

— Wilfrid Laurier,
to the House of Commons, 1917

The Munitions Scandal

Sam Hughes, Canada's minister of militia and defence, responded to the war by making sure that his friends, many of whom were wealthy businesspeople, got richer. Hughes was associated with the Shell Committee, whose members used their influence to land, and profit from, \$170 million in government contracts to make artillery shells.

By 1915, word of this **profiteering** — making excessive profits — had leaked out. The scandal became worse when the committee delivered only \$5.5 million worth of shells, and even those deliveries were late. The scandal ended Hughes' political career.

Conscription

When World War I began, the government had no problem persuading Canadians to enlist in the armed forces. But by 1916, people had learned about conditions at the front from newspaper accounts and from wounded veterans who had returned home. Many families had lost loved ones, and the casualty lists published in Canadian newspapers were making the human costs of the war clear. In addition, many Canadians had landed high-paying jobs in the war industries.

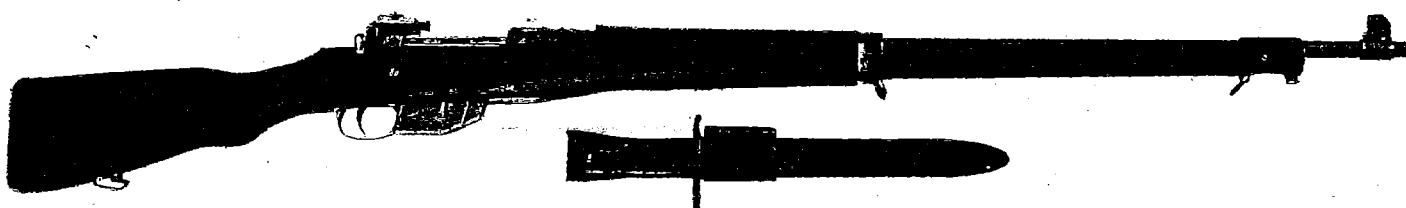
In response, fewer people wanted to sign up. Enlistment campaigns started falling short of their targets, so soldiers lost in battle could not be replaced. At the same time, Britain was pressing Canada for reinforcements.

To make up the shortfall, the government of Prime Minister Robert Borden passed the Military Service Act in July 1917. The act introduced **conscription** — forced military service. Many Canadians, especially those with family members serving overseas, supported the act. But others, including Liberal leader and former Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, were outraged at the idea of forcing people to fight.

Violent riots erupted, especially in Québec, where Francophones were nearly unanimous in opposing the act. The conscription issue created distrust between Anglophone and Francophone Canadians.

Although the conscription issue divided the country, it made little difference to the war effort. By the end of the war, only about 24 000 of those who fought overseas were conscripts.

Figure 6–27 Sam Hughes had already been criticized for supplying Canadian soldiers with shoddy equipment, including leaky boots and the Ross rifle, which jammed in the heat of battle. Would you blame soldiers for tossing the Canadian-made weapon in favour of the British Lee Enfield?



Conscription: Examining the Evidence

All of history is the telling of stories — interpretations of what happened in the past. Our links with the past are primary sources, which can be anything from a cave painting to a selfie. By making inferences from primary sources, we can create a story about what really happened.

For example, before calling for conscription, Prime Minister Robert Borden told the House of Commons in 1917 that “The time has come when the authority of the state should be invoked to provide reinforcements necessary to maintain the gallant men at the front.”

- **The primary source:** the text of Borden’s speech
- **An inference:** Borden used the word “gallant” to convince members of Parliament that Canadian soldiers deserved support. Therefore, Borden favoured conscription.



A former member of Parliament, **HENRI BOURASSA** was the outspoken founder and editor of the influential Montréal French newspaper *Le Devoir*. In 1915, he posed the following question:

French Canadians are being exhorted to fight the Prussians [Germans] of Europe in the name of religion, liberty, and loyalty to the British flag. But shall we allow Ontario’s Prussians to impose their domination at the very heart of Canada’s Confederation, aided and abetted by the British flag and British institutions?

Around this time, French Canadians were suffering a major erosion of their rights in Ontario. The provincial government’s Regulation 17 had made English the language of instruction and communication throughout the province. Franco-Ontarians were outraged.

Read below to see what Henri Bourassa thought about conscription in light of the new Ontario regulation. For contrast, read the opinion of Bourassa’s cousin, Talbot Papineau, who was an officer with Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry.



TALBOT PAPINEAU responded to his cousin while he was on the front lines in France. Papineau was killed during the Battle of Passchendaele.

Those of us in this great army, who may be so fortunate as to return to our Canada, will have faced the grimmest and sincerest issues of life and death — we will have experienced the unhappy strength of brute force — we will have seen our loved comrades die in blood and suffering. Beware lest we return with **revengeful** feelings, for I say to you that for those who, while we fought and suffered here, remained in safety and comfort in Canada and failed to give us encouragement and support . . . we shall demand a heavy day of reckoning.

Explorations

1. Who is Bourassa calling “Ontario’s Prussians”? What can you infer from his comparison? What does he think about Regulation 17? What does he think about conscription?
2. What can you infer from the Papineau quote about his view of the Canadian forces, the experiences he has undergone in war, and his view of those he says “remained in **safety** and comfort”?
3. How can evidence like these quotes help us better understand the **conscription crisis**?

Figure 6–28 In 1917, these Canadian military nurses — often called Bluebirds because of the colour of their uniforms — voted at a polling station set up at their field hospital in France. Why would these women have the right to vote while other women did not?



Conscription and the Vote

Prime Minister Robert Borden knew that the conscription law had stirred up a hornet's nest. So with a general election looming in late 1917, he introduced measures to improve his government's chances of winning re-election.

To begin, Borden brought in the Military Voters Act, which gave all members of the military, male and female, the vote. In addition, it allowed the government to assign the vote of soldiers who did not specify a riding to any constituency the government wished.

Borden thought that women with relatives fighting in the war were likely to support him and the policy of conscription. So the Wartime Elections Act gave the vote to close women relatives — wives, widows, mothers, sisters, and daughters — of men serving in the armed forces. This act also took away many people's right to vote. Those barred from voting included all enemy aliens, as well as conscientious objectors — people who did not believe in war.

In addition, Borden promised to extend the franchise to even more women. And when he realized that many Anglophone farmers opposed conscription because they believed they could not leave their farms, he granted farmers' sons an exemption from conscription, which he then revoked after the election.

Borden's election campaign was designed to appeal to women's patriotism and to fear. One leaflet, for example, suggested, "Before you cast your vote, think what the Kaiser [the German emperor] would like it to be." Posters and editorial cartoons portrayed the possibility of Germans invading Canada and attacking women and children in their homes.

Borden and his supporters easily won the election, and conscription went into effect. But the debate had been divisive and left a legacy of bitterness between Francophones and Anglophones. Borden did keep his election promise to women; and in 1918, women who were older than 21, who were not alien-born or Aboriginal, and who met provincial property-ownership requirements had the right to vote in federal elections.

Recall . . . Reflect . . . Respond

- Many Canadian women won the right to vote in federal elections because of the political tactics Prime Minister Robert Borden used to ensure his re-election. An old saying — the end justifies the means — suggests that questionable methods are justified if the outcome is positive. Did the positive outcome for women in 1917 justify Borden's tactics? Explain your response.
- Think about the responses to war of Canadians at home and identify the two you believe had the greatest long-term impact for Canadian society, politics, or identity.
- Give reasons for your choices. Share your decisions and reasons with a partner.
- Some people believe that Canadians who did not enlist in the armed forces benefited greatly from World War I. Develop three pieces of evidence you could use to argue in favour of, or against, this position. Share your ideas with a classmate. After your discussion, identify the arguments that most effectively support your position.

Changing Attitudes About Women

There is a world of difference between the Canada of a hundred years ago and our Canada today. Societal norms and attitudes have all changed. So when we attempt to understand people from the past, we should avoid judging them as if they lived in our own era. The period of World War I was a period of transition in views about women's role in society. Some people held "old-fashioned" opinions, while others were more forward looking. If the opinions below seem odd or even objectionable, ask yourself how the passage of time offers an explanation.



In the early 20th century, **STEPHEN LEACOCK** was not only a teacher, political scientist, and serious author but also the best-known humorist in the English-speaking world. He wrote this comment in an essay called "The Woman Question."

The women's vote, when they get it, will leave women much as they were before. . . . The world's work is open to [woman], but she cannot do it. She lacks the physical strength for laying bricks or digging coal. If put to work on a steel beam a hundred feet above the ground, she would fall off. For the pursuit of business her head is all wrong. Figures confuse her. She lacks sustained attention. . . . Women could never be a team of anything.



MARIE-JOSEPH DEMERS, member of Parliament for St. Johns-Iberville, Québec, made these remarks in the House of Commons in May 1918.

[W]e all recognize [women's] sublime mission; that is to say, the moral and intellectual development of our children. I believe that it is a dangerous experiment to take them away from our homes.



NELLIE MCCLUNG, author and advocate for women's rights, wrote this in her 1915 book, *In Times Like These*.

No person denies a woman the right to go to church, and yet the church service takes a great deal more time than voting. . . . But the wife and mother, with her God-given, sacred trust of moulding the young life of our land, must never dream of going round the corner to vote. "Who will mind the baby," cried one of our public men, in great agony of spirit, "when the mother goes to vote?"



Homesteader **IRENE PARLBY** was Alberta's first female cabinet minister and one of Canada's Famous Five.

If politics mean . . . the effort to secure through legislative action better conditions of life for the people, greater opportunities for our children and other people's children . . . then it most assuredly is a woman's job as much as it is a man's job.

Explorations

1. Choose a speaker whose opinion seems odd or unacceptable to you. Think about the values and beliefs that were the norm in early 20th-century Canada. Does that help you understand, if not approve of, the opinion? Why or why not?
2. Which speakers do you think were likely criticized for their views in the early 20th century? What opinions today might be viewed as odd or unacceptable 100 years from now? Explain your choices.

Chapter 6 Review

Knowledge, Understanding, and Thinking

1. Write a paragraph to explain what caused World War I. In your explanation, communicate the meaning and impact of imperialism, militarism, alliances, and nationalism.
2. What technologies of war affected how World War I played out? Rank the technologies in order of most influential to least influential. Explain your rankings.
3. Which event or development during World War I had the most impact on Canadian society and politics in the long term? Explain your choice.
4. What war-time issue increased tensions between English and French Canada? Why did these tensions come about?
5. Choose one person or organization that you think helped shape Canadian identity during this period of history. Explain your choice, using an example from the text.
6. What unique skill sets might Aboriginal peoples have brought to the war effort? What do you think it meant to serve Canada and relinquish their rights and status?
- c) Form a group with four or five other students who are playing the same role as you. Discuss your character and share ideas that will help you answer your interview questions.
- d) Return to your original partner. Take turns interviewing each other. The interviewer should take notes on the answers to the questions.
- e) With your partner, write a profile of each character, describing the conditions of his or her life during World War I, and what each thought about the war.
- f) How and why did the perspectives of these two characters differ?

8. **Evidence:** You have been asked to prepare a Remembrance Day blog to post on your school's website. To illustrate the blog, you plan to include five images that show how Canadians responded to World War I.

- a) With a partner or in a small group, select five different ways that Canadians responded to World War I that you would like to represent. You might, for example, want to cover Canadians volunteering for service or the contributions of women to the war effort.
- b) Seek out visuals that will help communicate your five chosen responses. You could use photographs, symbols, diagrams, and even cartoons to illustrate the response.
- c) For each visual, provide a heading that identifies the way of responding, e.g., "Volunteerism."
- d) For each visual, provide a label that tells about the visual (for example, names of people shown, date created, place shown, photographer, or artist).
- e) For each visual, write a caption to explain how the visual illustrates a Canadian response to World War I.

Communicating and Applying

7. **Historical Perspective:** Imagine that you can travel back to 1917 and interview two Canadians involved in the war effort: a man fighting in the trenches and a woman working in a munitions factory in Canada.
 - a) Work with a partner to prepare and conduct the interviews. Decide which role each of you will play. Together, make up a single set of five interview questions that could be asked of both characters. These questions should deal with general topics like hopes and fears, the future, the effects of the war on family and friends, and so on.
 - b) With your partner, make notes on what conditions or challenges your characters might face during World War I. Use this text or outside material as sources.

9. **Historical Perspective:** Many Canadians at home endured a different kind of suffering from those in the trenches of France and Belgium. They stayed behind and worried while family members and friends went to war. Sheila Rand of Winnipeg wrote the poem on this page to express her feelings about a cousin who was killed while serving overseas. It was published in 1918.

- In a few sentences, summarize the message in this poem. Identify words and phrases that were important for you in establishing the message.
- How would this poem have affected Canadian readers at the time?
- Suppose you had a chance to speak to the poet. What three questions would you ask her about this poem?
- Sketch an image to illustrate your understanding of the emotions described in the poem. You can add captions or labels if you wish.

To One Who Died in Action

By Sheila Rand, Winnipeg

For thirteen years,
Each first of June,
We marked our heights upon the schoolroom door,
With girlish jeers,
Each first of June,
I scoffed, 'O cousin you must grow still more
If you would be as tall as I,
Next first of June!
My solemn, pale-faced cousin, Fie!
To let me win the race.'

Ah me! Today,
This first of June,
They wrote that you in Flanders found a grave.
So now I say,
This first of June,
'O pale-faced cousin, sleeping with the brave,
Would I could grow as tall as you
Next first of June,
And stride, as British heroes do,
With head above the clouds!'

10. **Ethical Dimension:** The people who fought in World War I are long gone.

Why should we remember the war? Read what Historian J.L. Granatstein says about the war.

J.L. Granatstein, April 2014

The Canadian Corps became the strongest formation in the British Expeditionary Force, the Empire's shock troops. Its four divisions won victory after victory, and literally smashed the German army in the battles of the Hundred Days that ended the war in November, 1918, with a de facto German surrender. At the very least, this war record must be marked and remembered.

- Summarize Granatstein's reasoning.
- In your opinion, why should we remark upon and remember the deeds of World War I? Consider
 - the development of Canadian identity
 - how the war changed Canada
 - how knowledge of the past can help us live in the present
- There are other ways of remembering the deeds of war. For example, photos of World War I, such as the one below, can be found at the Canadian War Museum and the Canada 150 website. What do you think is the most effective way to commemorate a war?

Figure 6-29 Three soldiers in a German dugout surrender after their dugout is captured during the Canadian advance east of Arras, France, in October 1918.

