

The Character of our Canadian Military History Program

A Learning Organization (Hill 70) and Placemat: Canada in WW1

- First World War -

Learning Objectives:

- ✚ Describe the battle of Hill 70 and the meaning of the Victoria Cross.
- ✚ Summarize the reasons for the effectiveness of the Canadian Corps in WW1 and teams in general.
- ✚ Determine some factors involved in deciding whether Canada should or should not participate in war.
- ✚ Evaluate whether the communication of military history does or does not glorify war.
- ✚ Demonstrate the traits: communication; cooperation; courage; resilience; responsibility; thoughtfulness.

Character Traits Explored:

Communication, Cooperation, Courage, Resilience, Responsibility, Thoughtfulness

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CANADA**

**CONNECTING
CANADIANS
TO THEIR MILITARY
HERITAGE**

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A Learning Organization (Hill 70) and Placemat: Canada in WW1

Overview: The module begins with a short documentary video about Hill 70 that illustrates the increasing effectiveness of the Canadian Corps during the FWW. A discussion about the Victoria Cross follows, including the characteristics its awardees exhibit, and whether or not the award glorifies war. The module culminates with a placemat activity in which the participants are asked to recreate a timeline that show the Canadian Corps' 5-year WW1 experience.

History Learning Objectives

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Character Trait Development:

Communication, Cooperation, Courage, Resilience, Responsibility, Thoughtfulness

Total Time: 30 - 40 minutes

Group Size: 4 - 5

Age: 13 +

Space: Indoor with a flat surface large enough to layout five pieces of regular sized paper (timeline)

Materials (per group):

Part A: Presentation

- PowerPoint: "[Learning Org](#)"
- laptop with internet and projector

Part B: Activity

- 1 copy of "[Learning Org Handout](#)" (5 pgs.)
- 1 copy of "[Solution](#)" (p. 6-10 below)
- 1 blank envelope (letter sized)
- scissors (only for preparation)



Key Vocabulary

"unruly rabble": a group of loud, undisciplined, ordinary people (Note: often used humorously)

influx: the arrival or inward flow of a large amount

Corps: an organized part of the Military. In WWI, the Canadian Corps contained 4 Divisions, each with over 25,000 soldiers.

Preparation (for the presentation and activity):

- For POWERPOINT presentation with embedded VIDEO:

Setup laptop and projector for presentation of "[Learning Org](#)" and the video "[Lost Battlefield \(Hill 70\) – \(9 min\)](#)". In addition to being embedded in the PowerPoint, it can be streamed at:

<https://youtu.be/vbMUaJ5yGUM?t=2631>. (Note: the 9-minute version is embedded in the PowerPoint. The above link is for the 16-minute version and the video should automatically start at 43:50. Stop playing the video at 1:00:06. If using the link, it may be best to let video load first).

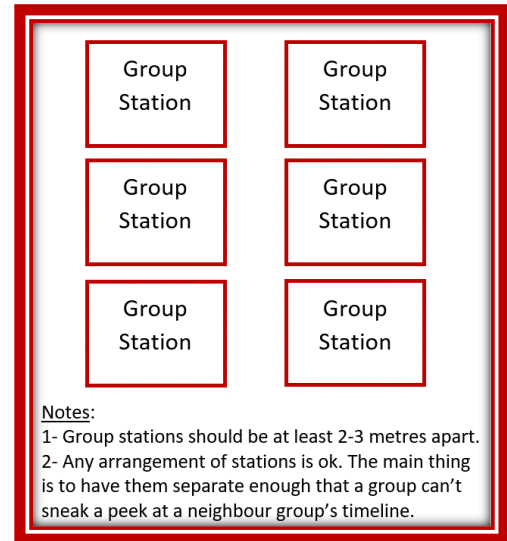
• For the TIMELINE ACTIVITY:

Prepare the following for each group:

1. Print a copy of the “[Learning Org Handout](#)” (5 pgs.) and shuffle the pages.
2. Print a copy of the “[Solution](#)” (p. 6-10 below), then cut the unshaded sections (Context, Soldiers and Officers, Battles, Key Personalities, and the images) into strips.
3. Shuffle the strips and images and place them inside the envelope.

(Note: Cut the strips into sizes making sure that their sizes won’t give the participants any hints regarding placement.)

4. Place the shuffled pages and the strip-filled envelope at a group’s station. Create as many of these stations as required for the number of groups.



- One possible arrangement of group stations. -

Directions for Presenting the Module

A- PowerPoint Instructions:

(12-15 min)

1. Present the PowerPoint “[Learning Org](#)” and follow the speaking notes as necessary.
2. Video Debrief:

Questions and Prompts (3-5 min)

Note: The questions below can be found on slide 4. Ask the participants the following or have them discuss in groups.

Debrief Key Idea 1

The Canadian Corps was becoming consistently effective because of the characteristics they and their leaders were increasingly embodying.

- Ask: *What were some of the things that made the Canadian Corps so formidable during 1917 and continuing until the war’s end?*

<ALL TRAITS can be explored here>

- Ask: *Recall Learmonth and Brown, the two VC recipients mentioned in the video. Which character trait(s) did they exhibit? Can you anticipate any situations in your own daily life where behaving in such a way might help or hurt you or the team?*

<ALL TRAITS can be explored here>

Debrief Key Idea 2

War is a difficult topic, not only to discuss, but also to evaluate as an idea. We all must educate ourselves so that when our society/nation decides whether or not to send our soldiers into harm’s way, our conversations are truthful, just, and compassionate.

- Ask: *Did the Hill 70 video glorify war? How about the awarding of a VC? Why or why not? (include examples with your answer). Did your group become divided during this discussion? Why or why not?*

<Thoughtfulness, Responsibility can be explored here>

B- Timeline Activity Instructions, Rules, and Roles:

(15-20 min)

1. The participants, in groups of 4 or 5, are provided with the 5 pages of the “[Learning Org Handout](#)” and the envelope containing the prepared strips from “[Solution](#)”.
2. Present the PowerPoint “[Learning Org](#)” (slides 6 - 7). Explain to the participants that the goal of the activity is to take the strips that are inside the envelope and place them in the appropriate location on one of the 5 handouts. Be sure to give them the hints written on the slides, e.g., i- It’s more of a logic puzzle, than a knowledge or memory puzzle.
 ii- Canadian Corps improvement through time is visible in the strips.
 iii- Each year page has at least one image. No year has 3 images.
 Tell the participants: “DO NOT WRITE the appropriate year on the top of the page; use the strips! There should not be any blank spaces beside any of the left column headings.”
3. Once a group believes that they are finished, all members of the group must raise their hands and wait quietly for the facilitator to come and evaluate their work.
 (Note: the facilitator should tell them how many strips they have in the incorrect location and to keep trying.)
4. Instruct the participants that they may begin the exercise.
5. Once one group has completed the task, show the solution to the groups (slides 9-13).

C- Scoring:

The first group to successfully complete the exercise wins the contest.

Options for increasing/decreasing difficulty:

1. As the exercise progresses, the facilitator can adjust the time of each session as necessary.
 2. The facilitator can add a clue at the beginning of the exercise (e.g., one of the handout pages can be given a year).
 3. The facilitator can give clues as necessary when evaluating the strip placements of each group.
-

Debrief

Questions and Prompts:

(5 min)

Note: The following questions are on slide #14. Also, some of these questions may be better asked and not discussed. Instead, allow the participants 10-20 seconds to think about their answer and reflect upon it.

Debrief Key Idea

To facilitate thoughts about the learning process (and the time required) among the *participants*.

- Ask: *After reflecting upon the learning process and the growth experienced by the Canadian Corps during the First World War, can you anticipate or speculate upon any difficulties that the soldiers may face towards the end of the war or after the war? Thinking about your own learning so far in your life, what similar difficulties might you later face? (In other words: reflect on your own personal experience and growth in your own life up to this point and then ask yourself what you might have to be wary of in your future?)*

<ALL TRAITS can be explored here>

- *Do you think that the Canadian Corps grew and learned gradually, or do you think there was a “turning point”? If you think it a gradual change, why do you suppose that occurred? If you had to choose a “turning point” for the Canadian Corps during the First World War, what would it be? Explain.*

<ALL TRAITS can be explored here>

A Learning Organization: Placemat Activity (Timeline SOLUTION)

Facilitator: 1. For each group participating you will need to make a copy that you will cut into strips, mix, then deposit into the small envelope- this is what each group will work with. 2. Keep at least one un-cut copy to carry with you as you check on the groups while they work.

1914

Context: The men of the Canadian Corps were “unruly rabble.”

Soldiers: They were inexperienced farmers, lawyers, etc. Some had militia training. Most were British born. They joined for travel, adventure, and glory.

Officers: Some had real experience from the 2nd Boer War. Most were British born.

Battles: None

Key Canadian Personalities:

Sam Hughes (Canada’s Minister of Militia)

Robert Borden (Canada’s Prime Minister)

Notes:

1. Hughes pushes for a Canadian Expeditionary Force to assist the British.
2. There was little time to prep and train the soldiers
3. Untested equipment was given to the men.



1915

Context: The Canadian Units switch from being a part of the British Armies to being a Canadian-“only” Corps.

Soldiers and Officers: influx of new men and additional training

Battles: 2nd Battle of Ypres = Trial by Fire (chlorine gas); 6 000 casualties in 4 days (McCrae’s poem)

Key Personalities:

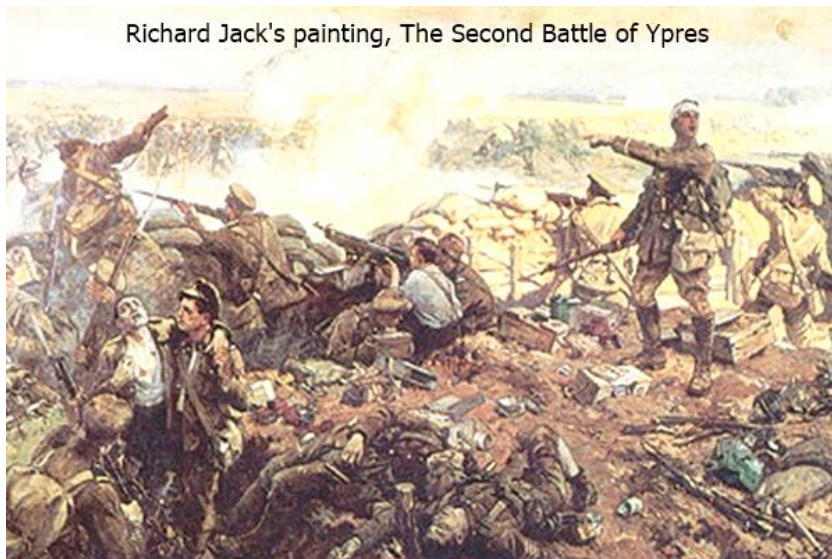
Hughes and Alderson are still battling.

Arthur Currie stands out at Ypres as a Brigade commander.

Notes:

1. Ross Rifle is problematic.
2. Communication improves once Canadian units are together.
3. However, structure and response is still rigid and reactive.

Richard Jack's painting, The Second Battle of Ypres



1916

Context: Intensive Trench Warfare. Julian Byng (British) is appointed Commander.

Soldiers and Officers: Gaining experience and after a time call themselves “Byng Boys”

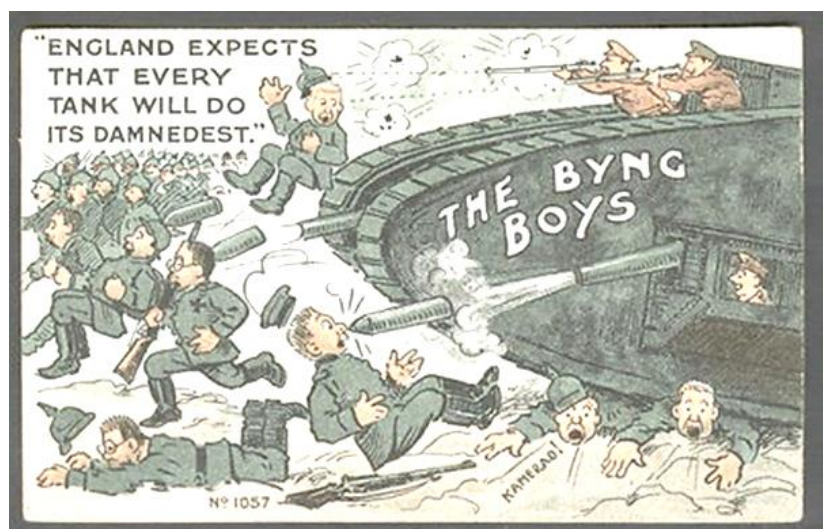
Battles: St. Eloi, Mt. Sorel, Somme- 24 000 casualties, (NL soldiers at Beaumont Hamel)

Key Personalities:

Both Hughes and Alderson are sidelined when Byng is brought in and he reorganizes. Currie is promoted to command Canada’s 1st Division.

Notes:

1. Byng wants to build an effective team that learns and tries new things.
2. Byng also wants to find a way to defeat the German defenses.
2. Currie is sent to Verdun to learn from the French experience.
3. Ross rifles are switched out for British Lee-Enfield in late 1916.
4. The tank was introduced but had minimal/no impact.



1917

Context: The Canadian Corps becomes successful, confident, and grows a reputation.

Soldiers and Officers: Experienced, adaptable, and knowledgeable. Plans and rehearsals.

Battles: Vimy Ridge, Scarpe, Hill 70, Passchendaele.

Key Personalities:

Byng is promoted back to the British mid-year (after Vimy).

Currie takes command of the Canadian Corps from Byng.

The Corps' infantry and artillery effectiveness continues to grow.

- Notes:
1. Bite and Hold begins and evolves into Bite, Hold, + Destroy using Platoons.
 2. Preparation and info sharing is a priority.
 3. Specialized and cross-training occurs as well as command decentralization.
 4. Coordination between air, artillery, and infantry begins.
 5. Germans began to call the Canadian Corps, "Canadians", rather than Brits.

Currie at Vimy describing a training activity.



Canadian soldiers on a destroyed pillbox at Passchendaele.



1918

Context: Canadian “Shock” troops; smooth and effective units.

Soldiers and Officers: Expert. They know what works and adjust as necessary.

Battles: Hundred Days (Amiens, Hindenburg Line, Cambrai, Mons), 45 000 casualties, 136-kilometre advance.

Key Personalities:

General Sir Arthur Currie.

The entire Corps (work battalion’s, engineers, artillery, air support, Nursing Sisters, Medical Corps).

- Notes:
1. The Germans consciously avoided the Canadians.
 2. After Passchendaele (1917), Canadians rested, trained, and fine-tuned.
 3. Currie fights to keep over-strength units.
 4. Reputation and confidence.
 5. The 100 Days and the end of the war.

