

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN: THE BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE

INTRODUCTION TO VIMY: WORKSHEETS

29th Infantry Battalion advancing over "No Man's Land" through the German barbed wire and heavy fire during the Battle of Vimy Ridge (courtesy Library and Archives Canada/W.I. Castle/PA-001020).

MESSAGE TO TEACHERS

To mark the centennial of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, and help educators and students think critically about primary sources, Historica Canada has created the *Think Like a Historian* series of videos and worksheets. The following activities provide an introduction to the Battle of Vimy Ridge and working with primary sources.

Inspired by the historical thinking framework developed by Dr. Peter Seixas for the Historical Thinking Project, the *Think Like a Historian: The Battle of Vimy Ridge* series complements Canadian middle-school and high-school curricula. This series invites students to deepen their understanding of the Battle of Vimy Ridge and analyze primary sources. It offers students the opportunity to think like a historian by investigating primary sources from the Battle itself.

The *Think Like a Historian* series was produced with the generous support of the Government of Canada. Historica Canada is the country's largest organization dedicated to enhancing awareness of Canada's history and citizenship.

Visit thinklikeahistorian.ca to view all of the videos in the series and download additional free, bilingual educational resources. Other educational resources are available on *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. We hope this series will help you teach students how to analyze primary sources.

ONLINE RESOURCES:

The Canadian Encyclopedia: thecanadianencyclopedia.ca

The Memory Project: thememoryproject.com

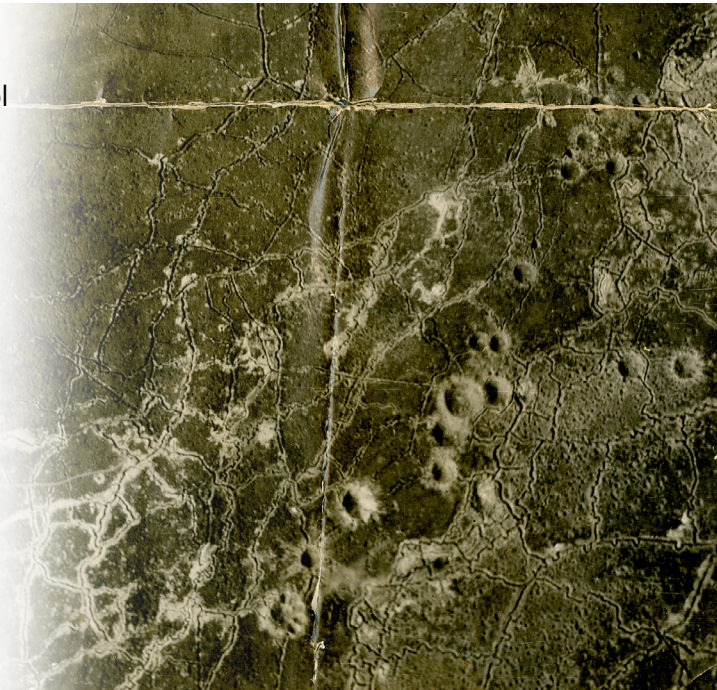
The Heritage Minutes: heritageminutes.ca

The Historical Thinking Project: historicalthinking.ca

The Dictionary of Canadian Biography: biographi.ca

The Canadian War Museum: warmuseum.ca

The Canadian Letters and Images Project: canadianletters.ca



Vimy Ridge from the air. This aerial photograph illustrates the major trench lines around an unknown sector on Vimy Ridge (courtesy Canadian War Museum/George Metcalf Archival Collection/CWM 19740387-060).

TEACHER TIP: To complete these worksheets, students may want to watch the videos more than once. Turning on the subtitles can help second language learners understand the video. Watch the videos as a class at least twice before beginning the worksheets.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS: Accommodations for Special Education, ELL and ESL students are included in these worksheets, and are identified as "modification."

INTRODUCTION

The Battle of Vimy Ridge took place over four days in April 1917 during the First World War. In this battle, the four divisions of the Canadian Corps fought together for the first time, and successfully took the high ridge at Vimy from German control. Despite the high number of Canadian casualties suffered at Vimy, the battle was regarded as a tremendous military victory, and one that was widely celebrated. The Battle of Vimy Ridge is considered by many historians to be an important nation-building event in Canadian history.

THE BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE: HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Battle of Vimy Ridge has long been considered a significant moment in Canada's history. An overview of the Battle of Vimy Ridge will help students understand the event before they investigate the primary sources. Reading secondary sources about the battle provides important background information before looking more closely at evidence from primary sources.

22nd Battalion resting in a shell hole on their way to the front line, September 1917 (courtesy Library and Archives Canada/PA-002045).



The Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France (© Havana1234/Dreamstime).

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: People and events in the past have historical significance if they created change that affected many people over time, or if they revealed something about larger issues in history or the present day. For more information on the Historical Thinking Concepts, visit historicalthinking.ca

- ▶ Read **Battle of Vimy Ridge** on *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.
- ▶ Make notes about important dates, people, statistics, events and long-term consequences of the Battle of Vimy Ridge in the context of the First World War.
- ▶ Consider the following questions:
 - How many Canadians participated in the battle?
 - How does Vimy compare with other battles of the First World War in terms of historical significance? Use the historical significance criteria to help answer this question.
 - What led to the Battle of Vimy Ridge? What were the consequences (short- and long-term)?
 - How is the battle remembered today?
 - Using the historical significance criteria, assess the importance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

EXTENSION: Working in a group of four, each student will take responsibility for reading and making notes on one of the following four articles: **Battle of Vimy Ridge**, **First World War**, **Evolution of Canada's Shock Troops** and **The Canadian Great War Soldier** on *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Come back together as a group. Each student will share with the group what they have learned.

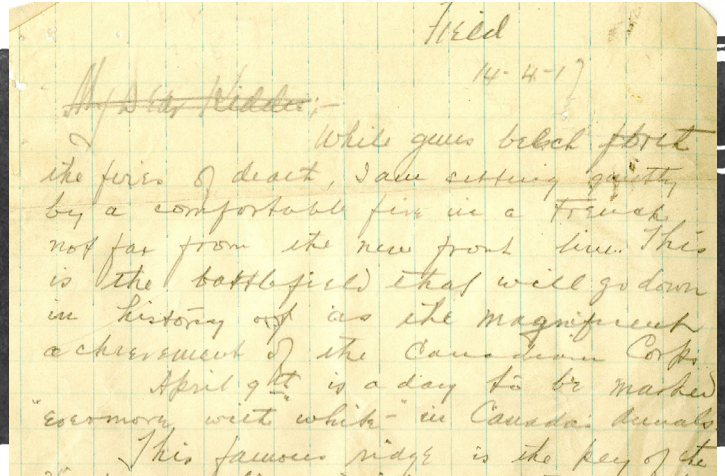
MODIFICATION: Working in pairs, read the **Battle of Vimy Ridge** on *The Canadian Encyclopedia* and complete the 5 Ws reading chart for secondary sources. The chart can be downloaded at education.historicacanada.ca.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

Primary sources are traces and accounts that were produced or created in the past. They help history students interpret and come to conclusions about the past. Primary sources provide evidence about a particular event, person or idea that helps shape our understanding of history.



"Canadians Lead in Triumph. 5816 Enemy in British Net," *The Globe*, 10 April 1917 (courtesy Media Commons/Robarts Library/University of Toronto).



Letter from Percy Willmot to Dorothy Willmot, 14 April 1917 (courtesy the Beaton Institute/Cape Breton University/MG 20.15.1 B).

Secondary sources are interpretations of the past that are based on primary sources. They are usually written after the time of the event under investigation and look back at the past from a distance.

- ▶ Working in pairs, brainstorm a list of examples of primary sources and a list of examples of secondary sources about what happened at the Battle of Vimy Ridge.
- ▶ Come together as a class. Create a T-chart on the board, with primary sources on one side and secondary sources on the other side.
- ▶ Compile the ideas from the groups in the class to fill in the T-chart.
- ▶ Are there any sources that are difficult to assign to one category or the other?
- ▶ What questions do you have?



Stills from the "Nursing Sisters" Heritage Minute, Historica Canada. Watch the Heritage Minute at historicanada.ca/content/heritage-minutes/nursing-sisters.

EXTENSION: You've been handed three newspaper articles about the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The first article was published in 1917, the second in 1936, and the third in 2017. How do you determine which is a primary source and which is a secondary source? Discuss as a class.

5-STEP FRAMEWORK FOR PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS

Consider using the following questions as guidelines when working through these activities:

- ▶ What kinds of things do we need to do as we examine primary sources?
- ▶ What do we need to know to be able to interpret a primary source?

There are five steps needed to analyze any primary source. For a trace or account from the past to become evidence in the investigation of history, we need to ask questions of it. Through these questions, a scrap of paper or a photograph can take on new meaning and reveal different information about the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

TEACHER TIP: An understanding of this framework is essential to completing the worksheets in the *Think Like a Historian* series. Take some time to walk through these steps with your class to make sure the categories are understood.

Find a printable 3D pyramid with prompts for each category at thinklikeahistorian.ca

1.	THE 5WS: Question the source. Who created it? When and where was it created? What is the source about? Why was the source created?
2.	CONTEXT: Situate the source in space and time, placing it in the wider picture of history. What else was happening at the time?
3.	EXPLORING: Examine the details of the source. What is it about? What words, images or symbols are used? What was its purpose?
4.	REACHING CONCLUSIONS: Use context, evidence and observations to develop conclusions. What can the source reveal?
5.	FINDING PROOF: Compare your conclusions with other primary and secondary sources to corroborate your findings. Do other sources confirm or challenge your conclusions?