

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN: THE BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE

VIMY IN NEWSPAPERS: WORKSHEETS

Newspapers from the time of Vimy Ridge offer important details and context about what Canadians read about the Battle and the war more generally. The political allegiances of newspaper editors and wartime censorship shaped the content that was published and how events were communicated. Most newspapers supported the war and censored themselves accordingly. Journalists often portrayed the war in a positive light to maintain and raise morale on the home front. In effect, news coverage had a dual purpose — to inform the public and to help win the war. This is something that historians need to keep in mind as they carry out their research.

These worksheets accompany the video *Think Like a Historian: Vimy in Newspapers*, which explores two newspaper accounts from *Le Canada* and *The Globe* in the days following the Battle of Vimy Ridge. 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 *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.

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



Papers from home (courtesy Canadian War Museum/George Metcalf Archival Collection/CWM 19920085-137).



GUIDING QUESTION: What can accounts from *The Globe* and *Le Canada* reveal about the Battle of Vimy Ridge?

There are five key steps to analyzing primary sources:

1. The 5Ws
2. Context
3. Exploring
4. Reaching Conclusions
5. Finding Proof

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 video as a class at least twice before beginning the worksheets. Work through the steps above, starting and stopping the video as needed.

THE 5Ws

The first stage of analysis is asking questions of the primary source. Working in pairs, answer the following questions after watching the *Vimy in Newspapers* video.

<p>WHO? Who wrote the account?</p>	
<p>WHEN? When was the account written and published?</p>	
<p>WHERE? Where was the account written and published?</p>	
<p>WHAT? What type of account is it?</p>	
<p>WHY? Why was the account written?</p>	

EXTENSION: Are there any gaps in your answers? Where might you look for more information?

CONTEXT

Contextualizing a primary source involves trying to place the source in space and time. Examining the context of a source helps us situate one piece of evidence into the wider picture of history. To analyze newspaper accounts as pieces of evidence from the past, it is important to conduct additional research about what else was happening around the time of the event.

The French-language daily newspaper *Le Canada* was founded in 1903 in Montreal. It had a circulation of around 18,000 and supported the Liberal Party. *Le Canada* was published in Montreal until 1954.

The English-language newspaper *The Globe* was founded in 1844 by George Brown in Toronto. By 1917, it had a circulation of more than 90,000. *The Globe* merged with *The Mail and Empire* in 1936 to become *The Globe and Mail*, which remains one of Canada's national newspapers.

During the First World War, censorship was regularly used to maintain or promote morale. Formal control of wireless communication was the responsibility of a Chief Censor in London. Governments also intervened in message control. Canada, for example, banned most left-leaning and foreign-language newspaper publications. Self-censorship was also practiced; the Canadian press, for instance, would sometimes gloss over the number of wounded and dead at key battles. Propaganda was also used by the Canadian newspaper press during wartime. Indeed, the Canadian press showed little concern for objectivity; they exaggerated Allied victories and minimized German successes. The editors and publishers were explicitly partisan in promoting loyalty to Britain and displayed favourable – even romanticized – coverage of Canadian troops because they wanted to help win the war.



Montreal Gazette, 10 April 1917 (courtesy Toronto Star Newspaper Centre/Toronto Reference Library).



La Presse, 10 April 1917 (courtesy Media Commons/Robarts Library/University of Toronto).

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

Imagine that you are the editor of a Canadian daily newspaper during the war. You are expected to censor the content of your newspaper. Write a short letter explaining why you are either a) in support of censorship to support the war effort, or b) against press censorship during wartime.

TEACHER TIP: Discuss and define key words as a class, to ensure any new vocabulary terms (censorship, propaganda, partisan, etc.) are understood by all students.

EXTENSION: For additional reading, look at **Newspapers, War Measures Act, and Censorship on The Canadian Encyclopedia**.

EXPLORING

Investigating the details of newspaper accounts can reveal important details. The words, phrases and symbols used can tell us about the meaning of the account. Even the location of an article or editorial within the newspaper can offer insight into its importance to the newspaper and to the audience of the day. A single primary source may not answer all the questions we have, and exploring it can lead to further questions. Use the comparison chart on pages 4 and 5 of this worksheets package to complete the following activity.

- ▶ Working in groups of three or four, complete each section of the comparison chart below, using the accounts from *The Globe* and *Le Canada*. Read the original newspaper accounts in the “Primary Sources” section of thinklikeahistorian.ca.
- ▶ Discuss your findings as a class.

LE CANADA EDITORIAL	
VOCABULARY LIST: Create a list of terms or phrases you are unfamiliar with. Try to identify their meaning.	
SYMBOLS: What symbols or metaphors are used in the account? What do they mean?	
MAIN IDEAS: What is the account about? List three key ideas communicated in the account.	
PLACEMENT IN NEWSPAPER: Where is the account located? What might the location of an account suggest about its importance?	
QUESTIONS: What questions do you have?	

EXPLORING (continued)

<i>THE GLOBE</i> ARTICLE	
<p>VOCABULARY LIST: Create a list of terms or phrases you are unfamiliar with. Try to identify their meaning.</p>	
<p>SYMBOLS: What symbols or metaphors are used in the account? What do they mean?</p>	
<p>MAIN IDEAS: What is the account about? List three key ideas communicated in the account.</p>	
<p>PLACEMENT IN NEWSPAPER: Where is the account located? What might the location of an account suggest about its importance?</p>	
<p>QUESTIONS: What questions do you have?</p>	

REACHING CONCLUSIONS

As you gather information about a primary source, start to develop an interpretation based on what you can infer from your observations. Consider the following questions when arriving at your conclusions:

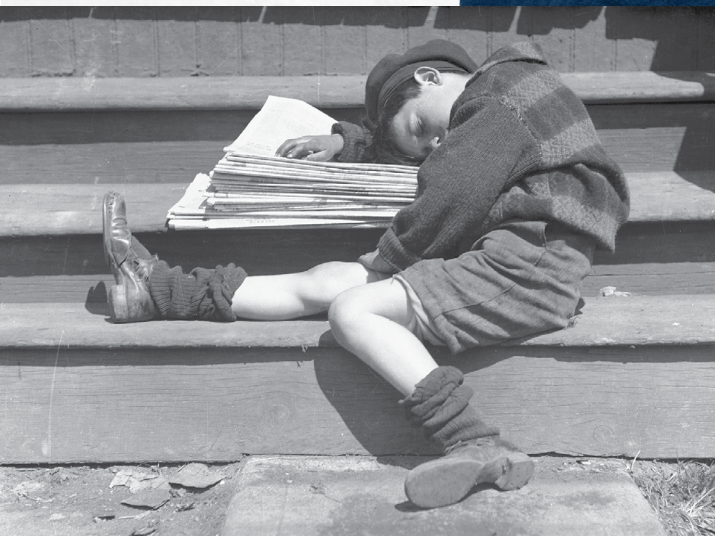
- ▶ What can these sources reveal about the Battle of Vimy Ridge?
- ▶ What can these accounts tell us about how Vimy Ridge was communicated to Canadians at the time?
- ▶ What can these accounts tell us about different perspectives on the Battle of Vimy Ridge?
- ▶ How are the perspectives of the French-Canadian and English-Canadian newspapers similar or different?

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

1. Working individually, make a list of five conclusions you have reached based on your analysis.
2. Working in pairs, share your findings with your partner. Compare the conclusions you have each arrived at. In your pair, come to a yes or no answer about the following question: Because something was published in a newspaper, does that make it factual?
3. Come together as a class and take a vote on the above question. Be prepared to explain your decision!



Soldiers leave for war, Union Station (courtesy of City of Toronto Archives/Fonds 1244, Item 827).



Sleeping newsboy (courtesy of City of Toronto Archives/Fonds 1257, Series 1057, Item 1950).



Newsboys selling papers in Toronto, King St. and Yonge St. (courtesy City of Toronto Archives/Fonds 1266, Item 6981).

FINDING PROOF

Before we reach a final conclusion about what newspaper coverage can tell us, we need more information beyond the reports from *The Globe* and *Le Canada*. We need to compare our conclusions about French and English attitudes towards Vimy Ridge with other primary and secondary sources. By comparing these accounts to others of the time we can develop a better understanding of the past in order to interpret the source.

- ▶ Compare the newspaper accounts in this video to the article on the **Battle of Vimy Ridge** on *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.
- ▶ Create a T-chart. On one side, make a list of the conclusions you have drawn about the newspaper accounts you have studied from *The Globe* and *Le Canada*. On the other side, create a list of facts from the account that support your conclusions. Can your conclusions be corroborated?

CORROBORATION: Evidence that confirms a conclusion.

NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS - CONCLUSIONS	THE BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE - CORROBORATION

- ▶ Using examples from the **Battle of Vimy Ridge** article, write a half-page reflection on whether you were able to confirm your conclusions about the accounts from *Le Canada* and *The Globe*.
- ▶ Discuss the findings as a class.
- ▶ Compare the stories from *Le Canada* and *The Globe* with other sources of the time located in the “Primary Sources” section at thinklikeahistorian.ca. Do you think one type of source is a more reliable representation of the Battle of Vimy Ridge?
- ▶ Come together as a class and take a vote on the above question. Be prepared to back up your decision!

EXTENSION: Write a half-page summary that assesses the benefits and challenges of working with newspapers as a primary source.

SUMMATIVE ACTIVITY

- ▶ Select a controversial event covered in newspapers today.
- ▶ Choose two newspapers, and compare their coverage of the same event.
- ▶ Answer the following questions:
 - What is similar about the accounts?
 - What is different?
 - What might this tell you about the perspective of the writer, or the political leanings of the newspaper?



The Calgary Daily Herald, 9 April 1917 (courtesy Toronto Star Newspaper Centre/Toronto Reference Library).



The Halifax Herald, 10 April 1917 (courtesy Toronto Star Newspaper Centre/Toronto Reference Library).

MODIFICATION: Have a class discussion about how social media has disrupted news reporting. We used to rely on professional journalists at national dailies to report on the news. Now, as a result of social media and Internet connectedness, we are all reporters. In your opinion, what is more reliable as a primary source: a major national daily newspaper, or someone on the street capturing events as they happen? Don't forget that both perspectives may involve political leanings of which we are unaware.



The Morning Leader (Regina), 10 April 1917 (courtesy of the Toronto Star Newspaper Centre/Toronto Reference Library).



The Toronto Daily Star, 10 April 1917 (courtesy Media Commons/Robarts Library/University of Toronto).

EXIT CARD: 3-2-1

- ▶ What are three new things that you learned about the Battle of Vimy Ridge?
- ▶ What are two new things that you learned about primary sources?
- ▶ What is one question that you have now?