

War at Sea

The Navy and The Merchant Navy: Comparing Experiences

During the Second World War, Canada's Navy and Merchant Navy made a vital contribution, particularly in protecting Allied shipping across the Atlantic. By listening to the accounts of those who were there, greater insight can be gained into this aspect of Canada's history.

Note: You may want students to use headphones if they are doing these activities independently. Alternatively, simply play the brief clips from war veterans through a pair of speakers.



Learning Outcomes:

1. To examine the various roles played by Canada in the war at sea.
2. To compile a biographical card of Canadian veteran.
3. To examine and compare the experiences of those who served in Canada's Navy and in the Merchant Navy.

Vocabulary Preview:

Convoy: a group of ships travelling together

Escort: a group of ships assigned to protect a convoy

Listen and Learn

The Merchant Navy

Listen to the stories of [John Covan](#) and [Edison Yeadon](#), veterans of Canada's Merchant Navy and answer the following questions:

1. What types of cargo did the Merchant Navy deliver?
2. What dangers did the Merchant Navy face?

Navy

Listen to [Harold Harden](#)'s story and answer the following questions:

1. Why was Harold Harden assigned to the Gulf of St. Lawrence and what was his ship's job?
2. What was the "triangle run"?
3. What type of encounters did Harold Harden's ships have with German ships?
4. How were the experiences of the Merchant Navy and the Navy both similar and different?



Discuss: The veterans of the Merchant Navy were not considered war veterans until 1992. Based on what you have heard on the Stories of the Second World War archive, do you think it was fair not to give these veterans full veteran status? Why do you think it took so long? Students may want to complete some background research from the resources below before debating this question.

Making A Navy Card

Search Veteran Stories on The Memory Project website to find the story of a war veteran who served in the Navy or Merchant Navy. While listening to his or her story, students should note some of the memorable anecdotes that are part of the story. Students use all of the information found on their chosen veteran's profile to make a "navy card" of his or her service. This card will be like a sports trading card and should include the following:

- a photograph of your veteran
- biographical details, including home town, year of birth, etc.
- details about his or her military service, including branch of service, battles fought, medals received, etc.
- a quotation from his or her story (students can copy and paste from the transcripts)
- a second photograph of one of the veteran's artifacts

How to Construct the Card

Using both sides of a recipe card or a similar sized piece of paper, students should arrange the information they recorded into a hockey card-type format. For example, the basic biographical and service information, including a photograph of the chosen veteran, could appear on the front.

On the back of the card students can insert a quotation from the veteran's story and photograph of an artifact.

The card can be enhanced by any other creative element the student would like to add, such as colour, further quotations or a small map of the veteran's area of service.

This activity can be adapted for any other area of service.

Further Resources

[Naval War](#) (the Canadian Encyclopedia)

[Battle of the Atlantic](#) (Veterans Affairs Canada)

[Merchant Navy](#) (Veterans Affairs Canada)