

Memory Project Lesson Activities

The activities below are based on the Memory Project dvd which contains the stories of a variety of Canadian veterans from wars and peacekeeping missions during past 100 years.

Thumbnail Sketches of Veterans

John Babcock: Was Canada's last surviving veteran of the First World War. Although he did not see combat, his story speaks to another age when Canadians were engaged in war from 1914-1918.

Albert Wallace: Served as a flight lieutenant during the Second World War in the RCAF and flew bombing missions over Germany. His plane was shot down during the war, and he served as a prisoner of war at Stalag Luft III, the famous German PoW camp.

Gerry O'Pray: Served in the UN peacekeeping mission to Congo from 1961 to 1966 where he was a teletype installer and repairer. He talks about the challenges faced by peacekeepers such as being able to fire your weapon only if fired upon.

Susan Beharriell : Served as an intelligence analyst during the Cold War and was on duty during the Iranian hostage crisis, the shooting down of Korean Airlines jet in 1983, the first Gulf War, as well as the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States where she was working for NORAD. She also talks about the challenges faced by women venturing into what was thought to be a "man's world."

Phyllis Howald: Served as a finance clerk for Canadian forces and was on duty in Visoko during the Bosnian war which lasted from 1992-1995. Travelling to Canadian camps wearing a UN helmet and flak jacket, she brought pay to the troops in the face of danger such as sniper fire and rocket propelled grenades.

Mort Lightstone: Served in the Korea War with the RCAF as part of the Korean airlift during that conflict. He waited 39 years to be recognized, along with other veterans of the Korean War, as a veteran eligible for full benefits from the government, similar to those of the Second World War.

Mark Bossi: Joined the army in 1977 and served in Afghanistan where he was part of the Civil Military Co-operation (CIMIC) tasked with building relations with locals in Afghanistan.

ACTIVITIES

Snowball Discussion Technique

View one or more of the veterans' stories from the Memory Project and divide students into pairs to discuss what they have heard. After discussing for 2-3 minutes, join together two pairs (for a total of four students) to discuss further their thoughts on what they have heard.

This snowball technique can be extended further to include a group of 8 or, finally, the whole class.

After listening to one veteran's story, the learning strategy could be repeated for the next veteran's story.

Inquiry-Based Activity

Inquiry-based learning is based on questions students develop themselves. It is often generated from a “prompt” such as a video clip or other stimulus. In this Memory Project dvd there are numerous “prompts” that will generate topics for further investigation by students.

Students listen to one or more of the veterans’ stories and decide to further investigate an aspect of their story. For example, a student listening to Mort Lightstone may want to research more about the fight for benefits for Korean vets; a student listening to Phyllis Howald may want to find out a bit more about sniper fire during the Bosnian war.

Posing Questions

Listen to any of the veterans’ stories. After listening, pretend that these veterans are in your classroom. What questions would you want to ask them about their war experiences?

As an extension to this activity, you could try to find the answers to the questions yourself. HDI: it might be interesting if there were a website or something where students could post actual questions and these vets could post their own answers—a virtual Q and A.

Oral History

Oral history is a valuable way of accessing the stories of the past. This is history passed down through stories and remembrances told by spoken word, as opposed to piecing together a story through primary source documents such as letters, diaries and photographs.

Listen to one of the stories on the Memory Project dvd and note three things you learned from the veteran’s experience that you would not likely be able to learn from a secondary source such as a textbook or online encyclopedia.

Discussion Questions

1. Did the things you learn tend to be more general or more detail oriented?
2. What is the value of first-hand accounts of a veteran’s military experience?
3. Is there anything to be wary of when listening to a single account or remembrance of a particular episode in history?

John Babcock

Canada's Last Surviving Soldier of the Great War

John Babcock did not see combat during the First World War as the great conflict ended before he could be sent to France or Belgium. After he returned from the war, he soon moved to the United States where he spent most of his life and became an American citizen.

John Babcock died in 2010 as Canada's last surviving soldier of the First World War. Visit the Canadian Encyclopedia for a copy of an [interview](#) he did with *Maclean's* magazine in 2007. As well, you can read a news story of his passing from [The Toronto Star](#).

After listening to John Babcock's account of his time joining the war, please answer the following questions.

1. Does the video footage of John Babcock have any historical value?
2. Some suggested that a state funeral be held for John Babcock when he died, but he was not in favour of the plan. Should a state funeral have been held for him?
3. Now that there are no living soldiers from the First World War, do you think their stories will start to fade from history?
4. What are the best ways for Canada to ensure that the stories of its Great War veterans are not forgotten?

First World War – Historical Maps

<http://www.greatwar.co.uk/places/ww1-western-front.htm>

<http://www.civilization.ca/cwm/exhibitions/guerre/intro-maps-e.aspx>

A Second World War Veteran's Experience at War

Please listen to Albert Wallace's fascinating account of the night his RCAF Lancaster bomber was shot down over Germany, a night that ended with him escaping with his life but becoming a prisoner of war.

Vocabulary

Flak: anti-aircraft fire from the ground

Happy Valley: The Ruhr Valley in Germany, a heavily defended area

coned: caught in searchlights

incendiaries: flammable fluid to cause fires when bombs hit

Pre-reading: You may find it useful to read [this article](#) and explore others from the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum. This will help you understand a little bit about being in a bomber crew during the war.

Before Viewing The DVD

Brainstorm with a partner:

What do you think it would be like to be in a bomber during the Second World War? What would scare you the most? What would attract you to this part of the military as opposed to the army or navy?

Listen to Albert Wallace

While listening to Albert Wallace's story, please answer the following questions:

1. What was Albert Wallace's trans-Atlantic crossing like?
2. What sort of things did bombers have to be aware of to ensure the safety of their flights? What dangers did they face from the moment they took off?
3. What did Albert Wallace's plane do once it was "coned" or caught in the search lights?
4. What brought Albert Wallace's plane down?
5. What happened to him after he jumped out of the plane?

Questions For Discussion

1. Why do you think Albert Wallace has such a detailed memory of something that happened 70 years ago?
2. If Albert Wallace were speaking in person to your class, what questions would you have for him?
3. What impressions are you left with about serving in the RCAF after hearing this story?
4. How valuable is a story such as Albert Wallace's for those studying Canadian history? Give this a rank from 1 to 5, with 1 being not very valuable and 5 being extremely valuable. Have a justification for your answer.

Further Research

1. Stalag Luft III, where Albert Wallace was sent to prison, is one of the most famous prisoner of war camps from the Second World War. It was the prison from which a group of PoWs attempted to escape in 1944, forming the basis of the Steve McQueen film, *The Great Escape*. Find out more by reading [here](#) or exploring further on your own.
2. The Royal Canadian Air Force. Read more about the role of the RCAF by looking at these two pages from the Canadian War Museum

http://www.civilization.ca/cwm/exhibitions/chrono/1931rcaf_e.shtml

http://www.civilization.ca/cwm/exhibitions/chrono/1931bomber_command_e.shtml

Write 2-3 sentences in which you explain how significant the role of the RCAF was in terms of Canada's contribution to the Second World War.

Historical Maps:

<http://www.303rdbq.com/pow-camps-map.jpg>

<http://www.merkki.com/images/powcampsingermanymap.jpg>

Comparing the Military Experience across Time

Listen to the stories of one or more veterans listed below and note down the types of challenges they faced. Afterward, compare those experiences and note any similarities and differences. Are you surprised by any of your findings?

Veteran	Time and Place of Service	Challenges Faced
Albert Wallace	Second World War (RCAF)	
Gerry O'Pray	UN Mission in Congo (signaler)	
Mort Lightstone	Korean War (RCAF)	
Susan Beharriell	Cold War (Intelligence Analyst)	
Phyllis Howald	Bosnia (Finance Clerk)	
Similarities		Differences

Questions: How do you account for the similarities as well as the differences?

The Forgotten War

A Canadian Veteran of the Korean War

"I don't mind pointing out that this medal here, was awarded to me by Canada for service on the Korean airlift 39 years late."

After Canadian forces fought in the Korean War from 1950-1953, the soldiers, naval officers and airmen returned to Canada to discover they would not be eligible for full benefits accorded other war veterans because the Korean War was being labelled a "police action."

Activity

Your task is to listen to the story of Korean War veteran Mort Lightstone and use his commentary to help you decide if Korean War veterans should be granted full benefits.

To give you some background on the Korean War, read the text and [view this video clip](#) from the War Amps; additionally, you may want to supplement what you already know by reading the text and viewing [this clip](#) from the CBC Archives. Feel free to consult whatever other sources you have on the Korean War such as your textbook or another authoritative website.

After conducting your research and listening to Mort Lightstone, discuss in groups of four or five if Korean War veterans deserve full benefits for their participation. Make a list of those reasons.

Guiding Questions

1. Why would the Canadian government refer to the Korean War as a "police action"?
2. What was the experience at war like for Mr. Lightstone? When was "the movie over" for him?
3. In what ways do you think the war experience of Mr. Lightstone was similar as well as different from that of a Second World War veteran? (note: you may want to refer to or listen to the video of Albert Wallace on this dvd)
4. The Korean War has often been referred to as the Forgotten War. Why do you think that is?

Considering Historical Significance

Historians often consider the significance of historical events by looking at whether an event, person or piece of legislation, for example, caused a great deal of *change* for many people over a long period of time or whether the topic under study *reveals* anything to us about an enduring or emerging issue in history.

What is the historical significance of the Korean War? How is it particularly historically significant in Canadian history?

Korean War Historical Maps

http://www.kvacanada.com/maps_koreantheatre.htm

http://www.kvacanada.com/maps_demarc.htm

[From official US military history](#)

[RCAF No. 426 Transport Squadron airlift](#)

Peacekeeping

"I put my uniform on every day and I was proud every day I put that uniform on."

Canada has participated in many peacekeeping missions since the late 1950s. What is peacekeeping like, though?

Listen to the stories of Canadian peacekeepers Gerry O'Pray and Phyllis Howald. What were their experiences like?

Before beginning

1. With a partner, brainstorm a description of what you think life is like for a peacekeeper. Is it boring, exciting?
2. What does the word "peacekeeping" mean to you?

The Peacekeepers

Listen to Gerry O'Pray and Phyllis Howald and note down what they say about being a peacekeeper and any other related issues. You might listen for what they say about:

- Dangers/Challenges
- Fears
- Accomplishments/Pride
- Daily Life
- The nature of their duties
- What they experienced upon their return
- Their feelings about Remembrance

Further Questions:

1. Did your opinion of what peacekeepers do change after listening to the accounts given by Gerry O'Pray and Phyllis Howald?
2. What surprised you most about what you learned from their stories?
3. What "trades" did Gerry O'Pray and Phyllis Howald do as peacekeepers?
4. What distinction did Phyllis Howald make between "peacekeeping" and "peacemaking"?
5. Phyllis Howald says those who served between the Korean War and the war in Afghanistan are forgotten. Do you agree?
6. If Gerry O'Pray or Phyllis Howald were visiting your classroom, what questions would you have for them?
7. Is Canada still a peacekeeping nation? On what evidence do you base your answer?

Further Information

View the [Historica Minute](#) about Canadian General Jacques Dextraze in the Congo.

A summary of the history of Canadian peacekeeping is found in [this article](#) from The Canadian Encyclopedia.

Some myths and facts about Canada and peacekeeping are found [here](#).

Historical Maps

[Bosnian War 1990s](#)

[Congo Crisis](#)

<http://mappery.com/Republic-of-Congo-1964-Military-Map>

A Canadian Veteran from the War in Afghanistan

“We weren’t going out there to make enemies, we were going out there to make friends.”

Canada has been involved in the war in Afghanistan since 2002. The conflict has cost 157 Canadian lives since then. Mark Bossi works in Civil Military Co-operation (CIMIC) for the Canadian Forces. His role in Afghanistan was quite different from what one might normally think about a Canadian soldier doing on a military mission.

Listen to Mark Bossi’s account of his experiences in Afghanistan and answer the questions below in small groups or as a class.

Questions

1. What was Mark Bossi’s motivation to join the Canadian Forces?
2. What was the purpose of CIMIC?
3. Consider what you know about Canada’s role in other wars during the 20th century. In what ways is the CIMIC operation different? What does this tell you about the nature of fighting wars today?
4. What differences did Mark Bossi note between his war in Afghanistan and previous wars?
5. What surprised you most about Mark Bossi’s story?
6. If Mark Bossi were in your class, what would you ask him about his time in Afghanistan?
7. After reading more about the war in Afghanistan from the sources below, in what ways is the Afghan war *similar* to other wars in which Canada has fought?
8. What differences would there be for a Canadian forces member such as Mark Bossi who works in CIMIC and a Canadian soldier who is involved in fighting insurgents? Which of these roles has earned greater media coverage of Canada’s war in Afghanistan? Why do you think this is?
9. Discuss: Was Canada’s mission in Afghanistan worth it?

The Other War in Afghanistan

The Canadian Forces were doing more than bridge building in Afghanistan. As part of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Canadians were running military operations against insurgents from Afghanistan as well as capturing and destroying weapons, clearing landmines and training security forces.

For a detailed history of the mission in Afghanistan, please visit the websites below:

[The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[CBC](#)

[Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade](#)

[Afghanistan Map #1](#)

[Afghanistan Map #2](#)