

Implementing a Holistic Approach to the Study of War:

Challenging Collective Memory

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Teaching War in the History Classroom: Challenging the
Dominant Combat Narrative

Introduction

- I've been researching about the teaching of world war one in Ontario classrooms-I've spoken with teachers, observed my own students as teacher candidates in their practicum, and examined dozens of Ontario history textbooks in the OISE library and archives, all which reflect the complexities of teaching war. Most resources present war into short, sanitized and neutralized packages that focus on battles and technology through photos, short summaries, primary documents, maps, timelines and in some cases, games.
- The focus of the new history and social studies curriculum in Ontario centres on disciplinary concepts, historical thinking concepts and critical thinking pedagogy provide opportunities to teach war more holistically.

Portrayals of War in the Classroom

- Historical examinations within history course studies frequently frame the **history of war within a chronology** of battle dates, victories, and military action.
- The boundaries of historical inquiry in the classroom have meant that students are often only exposed to understandings of war that are supported within limited chronological parameters and compartmentalized subsections.
- The **inclusion of counter-narratives**, such as anti-war activism, the destruction of the environment and the lives of citizens, is often difficult to insert into this framework. And are often viewed as less important.

Strategies for Implementing a Broader Lens

- **Avoid 'heroism'**: the lives of everyday individuals and community-based achievement is just as historically significant
- **War blurs the lines between military and civilian populations** so why explore these topics separately?
- Include the voices of war resisters and the voices of Children and Families
- **Alter language** (terms are suggestive): "Total war" suggests unity. "All out war" suggests anything and everything can happen
- Explore the **impact of war on environmental degradation** – immediate/ multi-generational affects

More strategies

- ◉ Complicate the **binary structure** of historical narratives [Us vs. Them, Good vs. Bad]
- ◉ **Challenging notions of citizenship**
- ◉ Provide deep historical context, critique and analyze-include **multiple perspectives**
- ◉ **Avoid tokenism**: authentic inclusion involves questioning the standard cultural lens
- ◉ **Name the names**: avoid categorizations of people

- Acknowledge the **central role of the military industrial complex** in shaping national and international perspectives as well as supporting national commemorations of war.
- Integrate the **experiences of women** to reflect a historically accurate examination of their activism and participation.
- The voices of women are usually portrayed in supportive roles/fulfilling duties of good citizenship and good Mothers and as benefiting from war participation. Are there other positions?
- Women, Indigenous communities, 'Minority' cultures are embedded in local/ global histories

How to Connect to Historical Thinking Concepts in the Curriculum

Establish historical significance

Use primary source evidence

Identify continuity and change

Analyze cause and consequence

Take historical perspectives

Understand ethical dimension of
historical interpretation

Source: www.historicalthinking.ca

How to Connect to Critical Thinking Concepts in the Curriculum

Tc2.ca model for developing a thinking classroom focuses for teacher action:

- building a community of thinkers
- promoting critical challenges
- teaching thinking tools
- assessing for thinking

War is Complicated

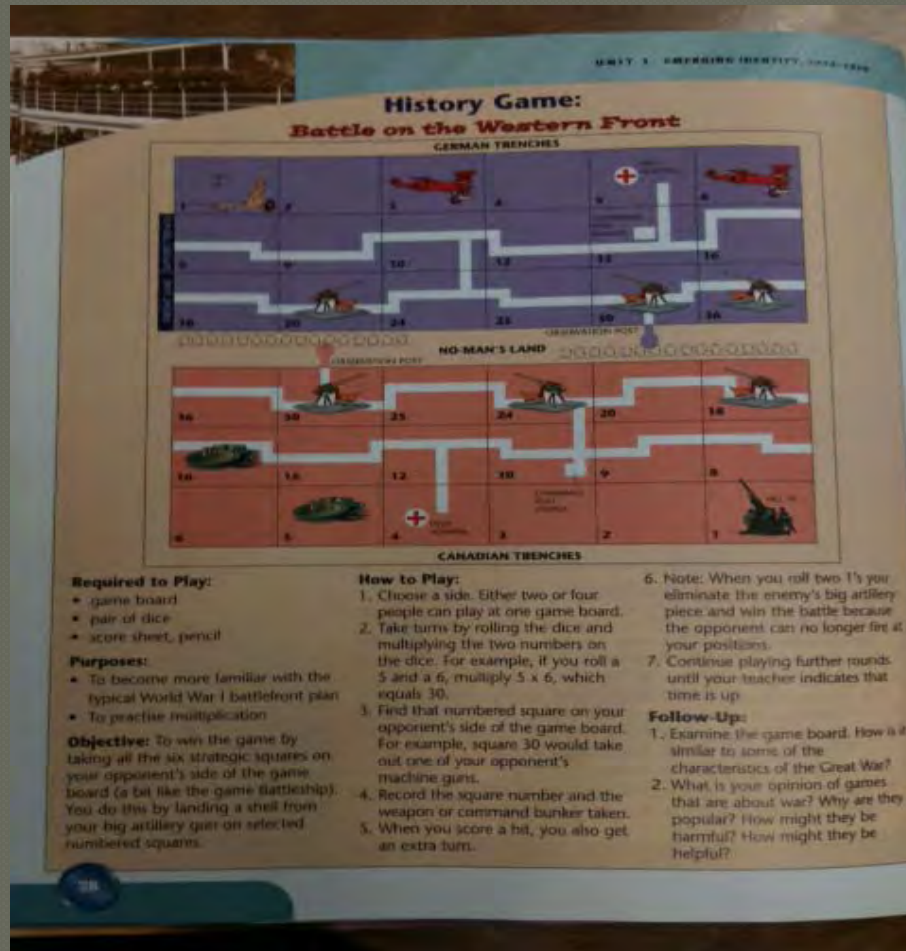
History Textbooks portray war within simplistic themes and a division between Combat and War work (separate chapters examine the home front versus the war front)

Challenge Textbooks that suggest that war is Inevitable

● Textbooks chart “The Road to War”

1. Archduke is assassinated.
2. Austria sends ultimatum.
3. Serbia rejects.
4. Austria invades Serbia.
5. Russia mobilizes army.
6. Germany declares war on Russia.
7. France and Germany declare war on each other.
8. Britain declares war on Germany
9. Canada and the rest of the British Empire are at war!

Challenge the use of war games: Some are found in textbooks/others online.



More Suggestions:

- Focus on **diverse perspectives**- competing visions of war before-during and after-and lack of support
- Warfare is the product of a wide range of **interrelationships**: political, economic and social, that exists in multiple layers.
- Explore **multiple and alternative narratives- question state classifications** of “enemy alien”
- Allow for the complexities of war to be explored. Avoid neat, summaries.
- Explore the ways in which wars affect societies, **institutional structures**

Where to find materials:

- **Community-based interviews, oral histories, first-person accounts**
- **Partnerships with public libraries, community centres, museums, local, provincial, university archives**
- **Seek out new scholarship: academic journals, new books, and attend conferences**
- **Research online:**
- <http://www.thenhier.ca/>
- <http://tc2.ca/>
- <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca>
- www.collectionscanada.gc.ca
- <http://www.archives.gov.on.ca>
- <http://www.chashcaccommittees-comitesa.ca/ccwh-cchf/en/>

War affects everyone.

War work required to support the trenches

- Military Uniforms (clothes, boots, etc)
- Food and water
- General supplies
- Medical supplies
- Support staff for all procedures
- Medical support staff
- Transportation (all)
- Other....

Links between Farm Service Corps/Munitions Factory work and combat



[Lois Allen Camp in Winona On 1918, NLA, MG 30-C173] Women work inside a Northern Electric Co. Ltd. factory in Montreal, Que. during the First World War. (Library and Archives Canada/Canadian Press)
Fine-Meyer 2014

Links between making and wearing uniforms for combat



WATCH YOUR OPPOSITE MIND
Photograph by Western Newspaper Union

MAKING TOMMY'S UNIFORM

SG505 : At the Hall Of the Royal Army Clothing Factory, Pimlico, London, a corps of women working with modern machinery are able to keep a whole army division clothed. The efficient system, and the working conditions at this factory are admirable in every way. Photo shows woolen jerseys being inspected



Canada at War
www.canadaatwar.ca

Links between medical support & field hospitals & the battlefield



25. No. 2 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station. Officers and nursing sisters outside one of their marquees at Rémy Siding, Poperinghe.



The Diversity of Women's Contributions to the War Effort

[Red Cross ambulance, Toronto Archives Fonds 1244 item 885] & French Field Hospital

Grace MacPherson as a Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) driver for the British Red Cross on June 8, 1917. This photograph and others were taken for the Canadian War Photographs exhibition at the fashionable Grafton Galleries in central London, and appeared on the front page of *The Canadian News Record*, which was published by the War Records Office. Library and Archives Canada/Department of National Defence collection/PA-001305.



Red Cross ambulance
Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 885.

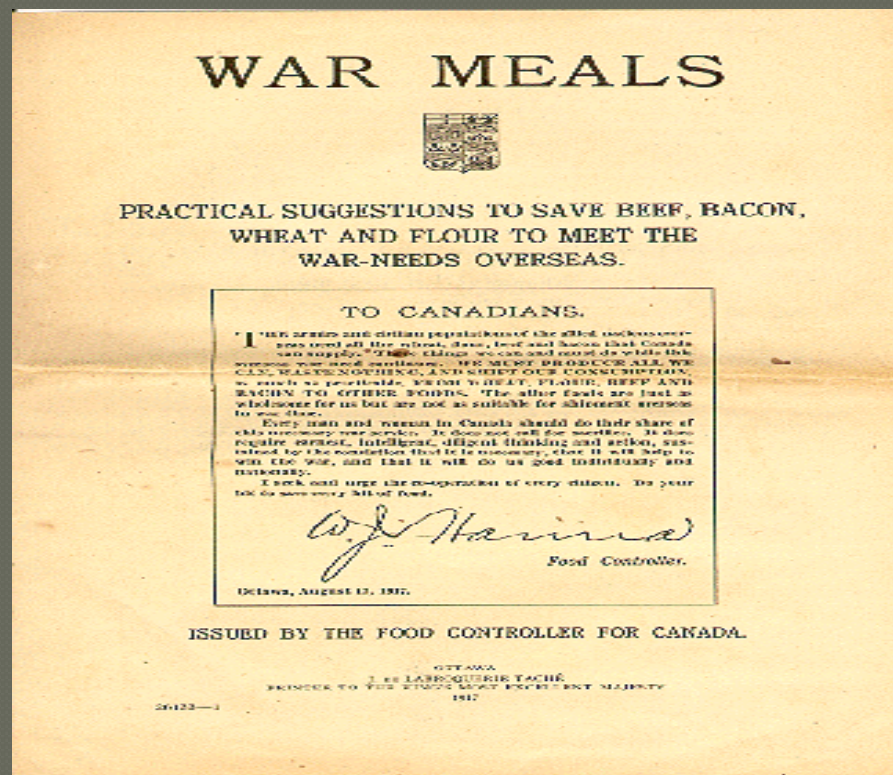
Nursing sisters overseas



Postcarddepot

www.delcampe.net

Rationing: not everyone supports the consequences



Long term impact of Internment camps in Canada



[Women, Children and men in Sprit Lake
Internment Camp Quebec, NLA, PA 170 620]
Fine-Meyer 2014

Hard labour for internees at the Kapuskasing camp, circa 1917.

(Photo courtesy of the Ron Morel Museum and Glenbow Museum)



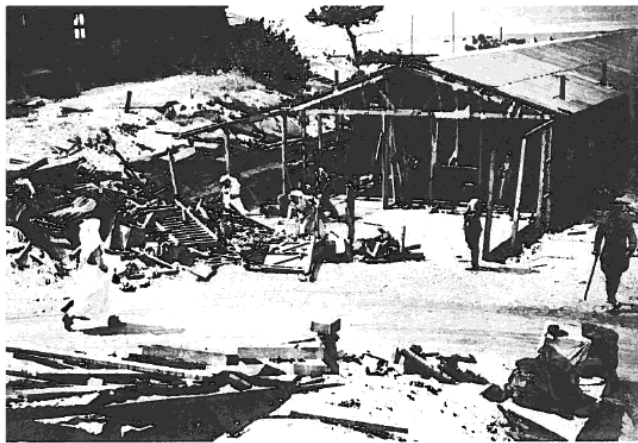
Long term impact of Propaganda



Victory?: Human and Environmental Consequences

Veterans in Christie Street Hospital, Toronto

[Canada's Nursing Sisters by G.W.L. Nicholson, Toronto, 1975]



30. Bombing at Etaples. The demolished wing of the nursing sisters' quarters, No. 1 Canadian General Hospital, after the air raid of May 19, 1918.



32. Caring for veterans. After the First World War many nursing sisters joined the staffs of hospitals for veterans. Here, nurses at Christie Street Hospital, Toronto, watch a race for handicapped patients in 1919.

31. Armistice Day in Valenciennes. Nursing sisters of No. 4 Canadian C.C.S. with citizens of the newly-liberated Belgian city.



33. Mrs. Eva Coghill, the first president of the Ottawa Branch of the nursing sisters.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

<http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2013/03>

Summarizing key details from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Report (2013)

- **World military expenditure in 2012 is estimated to have reached \$1.756 trillion**
- **The total is higher than in any year between the end of World War II and 2010**
- **This corresponds to 2.5 per cent of world gross domestic product (GDP), or approximately \$249 for each person in the world**
- **In 2012 the Canadian government spent \$22 billion on the Department of National Defence and \$1 billion on Environment Canada. (vowpeace.org)**