

WORLD WAR II (1939 – 1945)

World War II was the last major global conflict and was the bloodiest war in history. Tens of millions of soldiers and civilians were killed or injured. Canada again played a significant role in the Allied victory.

World War II will be covered in much greater detail in Grade 11, with an emphasis on the rise of Nazi Germany and the resulting genocide of the Jews in Europe (the Holocaust).

Read pgs. 242, 243, 245 and 248 and answer the following questions:

1. a) When did Adolf Hitler and the Nazis gain power in Germany? _____
b) What did the Nazis do once they were in power? _____
2. Explain what the policy of appeasement was. _____
3. a) Which countries made up the Allies? _____
b) Which countries made up the Axis? _____
4. Why was Canada not automatically at war when WWII began? _____
5. Describe why volunteers flocked to the armed forces when Canada joined the war effort. _____

6. a) How many Canadians served in the war? _____
b) How many Canadians were killed? _____

CAPTAIN JOHN FOOTE AND THE RAID ON DIEPPE

One of the most tragic battles of World War II, from a Canadian perspective, was the raid on Dieppe. Read the following information on the Dieppe raid and answer the questions that follow:

In 1939 the German army swept into Poland through Belgium. Great Britain declared war on Germany and once again Europe was plunged into war. The Canadian Parliament also declared war on Germany and began to rebuild its armed forces for the coming struggle. When Japanese planes bombed the American naval base at Pearl Harbour, in Hawaii, on December 7th, 1941, the conflict became a world war.

In Europe, the success for the German armed forces took the world by surprise. In only six weeks the Germans had defeated Poland and rolled over France. The British army, sent to defend France, miraculously escaped from complete annihilation on the beaches of Dunkirk, but had to leave all of its weapons behind. The victorious German Army stood on the French side of the English Channel and planned an invasion of England. No one doubted it would come.

Within weeks the first Canadian troops were loaded aboard ships and headed for England. There, they prepared for the German invasion that never came. The troops waited for three years. Partly out of boredom and partly out of folly, the British High Command planned "Operation Jubilee," a secret raid on German defenses in 1942. It would be mainly comprised of Canadian troops.

Why attack the Germans at Dieppe?

Boredom

One of the reasons for the Dieppe attack was to put Canadian troops into action. When World War II began in 1939, Canada joined the Allies in battling the Germans. Many Canadian soldiers were sent to Britain to defend it from a German invasion. When two years passed without an attack, the Canadian soldiers became bored and restless. Their families back in Canada also began to protest their inactivity.

Help for the Russians

Another reason for the Dieppe raid was to create a second front. The Russians had been fighting the Germans in Eastern Europe since the summer of 1941. By 1942, they wanted England to relieve the pressure on Russia by creating a diversion for the Germans in Western Europe. England agreed and asked Canada to send its soldiers in Britain to fight the Germans.

Test for the Allies

Finally, the Dieppe raid was also a chance for the Allies to test their invasion techniques and equipment. Allied military leaders believed that the raid at Dieppe would give their troops valuable experience at launching a major water-to-land assault against the Germans. British warplanes were to bomb the Germans from the air while 6,000 troops and 50 tanks moved from sea to land using landing crafts. The Allies hoped to capture the port and hold it for 12 hours, then take out German prisoners and gather information about German defenses.

A Foote on the Beach

Honorary Captain John Foote, Chaplain of the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, was so determined to accompany his unit into battle that he stowed away on an invasion boat. Then, when he could have left the horror that marked the ill-fated assault on Dieppe, he decided to stay as a prisoner of war.

Foote was a thirty-five year old Presbyterian minister in Coburg, Ontario when Canada officially entered WWII on September 10, 1939. He was among the earliest to apply for duty and was among the first to arrive in England. Starting with a nucleus of only 10,000 soldiers, Canada's armed forces numbered more than a million men and women when the war ended in 1945.

Along the beach close to 5,000 Canadians made an early morning landing at the chalk cliffs off the small port and gambling town of Dieppe. The battle lasted nine savage hours during which the troops faced constant, deadly enemy fire. They were raked by machine guns and picked off by snipers. Foote joined the First Aid Post on the beach and set about helping the wounded, constantly exposing himself to the hail of bullets. As the ocean tide went out, the Aid Post moved to a stranded landing craft, and Foote hauled in wounded men to its cover, only to remove them later when enemy shelling set it on fire.

When the evacuation order came, Foote carried wounded men from the beach to waiting landing craft. "Every man carry a man," Foote shouted to all who could hear him. He may have saved as many as thirty lives and his courage set an inspirational example.

Foote had several opportunities to embark, but as the last boat departed, he waded back to the bloodied beach. "The men ashore would need me far more in captivity than any of those going home," was his belief. Foote voluntarily joined the grim column of captives on the march to prisoner of war camps where he stayed until the end of the war.

For his heroism, Foote was awarded the Victoria Cross. There were many acts of heroism that day on the beaches of Dieppe, and many more would follow, each one deserving the gratitude of all Canadians.

Results of Dieppe

The Dieppe raid was a military disaster for Canada. Five thousand Canadian soldiers, 1,000 British Commandos and a small force of Americans landed on France's northern shores on August 19, 1942. Over half of the Canadians involved were killed or captured. At the end of the nine-hour raid, 907 Canadians were dead and 1,874 were taken prisoner by the Germans. However, the Canadian sacrifice was not in vain. Canada's mistakes at Dieppe taught the Allies valuable military lessons.

When the Allies invaded France again on D-Day, June 6, 1944, they used what they learned from Dieppe to defeat the Germans and win the most important victory of the Second World War.

