

CANADA'S GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITIES: CONFLICTS

Canadians have fought around the world, and they have fought in the name of the British Empire, Canada, the United Nations, and NATO. They have performed great feats of heroism in combat. In Canada today, we maintain armed forces to defend our nation and our allies in other parts of the world.

WORLD WAR I (1914 – 1918)

Read pgs. 234 – 237 and answer the following questions:

1. a) What was World War I called? _____
b) How many people died in the conflict? _____
2. a) How many Canadians served in the armed forces during the war? _____
b) How many Canadians were killed? _____
c) How many Canadians were wounded? _____
3. a) Which three countries made up the Triple Entente? _____
b) Which three countries made up the Triple Alliance? _____
4. What happened in June 1914 that set in motion events which would culminate in the beginning of the war?

5. When Britain declared war on Germany, why was Canada automatically at war? _____

6. What three choices did the Canadian Parliament have in terms of deciding what to do in the war?

7. Why did so many men volunteer to fight in a war being fought far away in Europe? _____

8. Why was the Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge so important for Canada? _____

THE HEROES OF BEAUMONT HAMEL

A Day When Bullets Fell Like Rain

The following reading chronicles the story of the courageous men of the Newfoundland regiment who fought in the Battle of the Somme. Read the story and answer the questions that follow:

Each November 11, Canadians hold Remembrance Day ceremonies all across the nation. Originally designed to recognize only Canada's participation in WWI, today it honors all Canadians who sacrificed their lives in World War One, World War Two, Korea, and Afghanistan.

World War One changed Canada. Canada started the war as a colony of Britain and ended as a nation. In 1914, many people living in Canada thought of themselves as subjects of the British Empire first, and citizens of a self-governing nation called Canada second.

When Germany invaded Belgium and France in 1914, Britain declared war on Germany and called on all its colonies to send armies and supplies to support the war effort. Known as the Allies, men from Britain, France, Britain's colonies, and later America, volunteered to serve in the Allied Army. The 600,000 Canadians who responded to the call to support Britain were a part of some of the most famous and bloodiest battles of WWI. One of those battles was The Battle of the Somme in France.

Trench Warfare

The conflict between the Allies and Germany resulted in trench warfare. Both armies, more than 6 million soldiers, opposed each other in lines of trenches that stretched across France. Each side launched massive attacks on the other, but neither the Allies nor the Germans could break through the other's trench lines. However, in 1916, the British high command was planning a major attack to break the German lines at a little French town called the Somme.

Opening Day: The Battle of the Somme

It was at Beaumont Hamel on July 1, 1916, the opening day of the Battle of the Somme, that the Newfoundland Regiment fought its first engagement in France – its' costliest of the whole war. They were among the 100,000 Canadian soldiers who took part in the battle.

Promptly at 7:20 AM on July 1, 1916 a huge bomb was exploded under the enemy's front trenches. That was the signal for the infantry soldiers to advance. More than 100,000 Allied soldiers poured up and out of their trenches and started towards the German lines. The soldiers plodded across No Man's Land, as the distance separating the trenches was called, and the Allied artillery barrage opened up on the Germans.

Almost immediately, the Newfoundland regiment was in serious trouble. The artillery barrage moved forward on an inflexible, pre-arranged schedule, exploding artillery shells on the enemy. However, German riflemen and machine-gunners were protected from the shelling by the steep banks of their trenches and when the shelling stopped, they emerged from deep dugouts and shelters ready to meet the Allied soldiers – the men of the Newfoundland Regiment among them.

The lines of advancing troops moved steadily toward the enemy's front trenches as the Germans directed withering machine gun fire. At the same time, a number of German heavy guns which had escaped the British artillery barrage began shelling the Allies, catching the follow-up soldiers as they climbed out of their trenches into the open. The Newfoundland Regiment was ordered to move forward and to attack the enemy's front line.

The whistles blew and the men went over the top of the trenches. From their starting position in the British support trench known as St. John's Road, the Newfoundlanders had to cross some 230 meters of fire-swept ground before they reached even their own front line. As they made their way through zigzag lanes of barbed wire, casualties among the troops came with increasing frequency.

Those of the leading companies who finally emerged into No Man's Land looked down an incline to see for the first time the barrier of the German barbed wire more than 550 meters away. It was a wonder that any man could remain unhit more than a minute in the inferno of fire that swept across the exposed slopes.

Nevertheless, holding the parade-ground formations, the thinning ranks of the Newfoundland Regiment plodded steadily forward.

Dead Men Walking

Out in No Man's Land the air was so thick with German machine gun bullets that some of the men held their hands in front of their faces as though they were walking into a rainstorm. Halfway down the slope an isolated tree marked an area where the enemy's shrapnel, metal fragments from exploding bombs, was particularly deadly. Called "The Danger Tree," its twisted skeleton has been preserved and still stands as the spot where many a gallant Newfoundlander fell on that tragic July day.

In less than a half-hour, it was all over. The Commanding Officer, who from a support trench had watched the destruction of his Regiment, reported to Brigade Headquarters that the attack had failed. Afterwards the Divisional Commander was to write of the Newfoundland effort: "It was a magnificent display of trained and disciplined valor, and its assault failed of success because dead men can advance no further."

The casualties, soldiers killed and wounded, sustained on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme totaled 57,470 of which 19,240 were fatal. No unit suffered heavier losses than the Newfoundland Regiment, which had gone into action 801 strong. When the roll call of the unwounded was taken next day, only 68 men could answer their name. Every officer who went forward in the Newfoundland attack was either killed or wounded.

The 801 soldiers of the Newfoundland Regiment had come from all the little towns and villages of Newfoundland. Every family in Newfoundland mourned the loss of son, brother, or father.

At a Remembrance Day service nearly 70 years later, a 101 year old veteran remarked, "the mere mention of Beaumont Hamel can still break our hearts."

World War I battlefields in France, like the Somme, Ypres, and Verdun, stand out as examples of the total horror and butchery into which modern warfare had drawn the world. They are also places, many Canadians believe, where the modern Canada we know today, was born.

THE HEROES OF BEAUMONT HAMEL

The following words are used in the reading. Match the words with their meaning by placing the appropriate letter in the blanks. Use a dictionary if you are not sure of the word meanings.

Column A

1. ____ No Man's Land
2. ____ Fatal
3. ____ Casualty
4. ____ Shrapnel
5. ____ Artillery
6. ____ Infantry
7. ____ Citizen
8. ____ Colony

Column B

- a. people governed by another country
- b. a person who is injured
- c. pieces of metal from an exploding bomb
- d. an injury that results in death
- e. distance between enemy trenches
- f. a member of a city, region, or nation
- g. very large mounted guns
- h. foot soldiers in an army

Circle the letter of the information that best completes each statement.

1. At the start of World War One, Canadians thought of themselves as:
 - a. British subjects
 - b. German subjects
 - c. Canadian citizens
 - d. American citizens
2. We can infer from the reading that the number of soldiers in a regiment is:
 - a. 600 soldiers
 - b. 800 soldiers
 - c. 650 soldiers
 - d. 1000 soldiers
3. The November 11 Remembrance Day honors the Canadians who died in:
 - a. Korean War
 - b. WWI and WWII
 - c. WWI and Korea
 - d. WWI, WWII, Korea, and Afghanistan
4. World War One took place between the following years:
 - a. 1914 to 1918
 - b. 1914 to 1919
 - c. 1913 to 1918
 - d. 1913 to 1919
5. Total number of soldiers in the Allied and German armies was:
 - a. 4.5 million
 - b. 6 million
 - c. 5 million
 - d. 3.5 million
6. The opening of the Battle of the Somme was signaled by:
 - a. a whistle blast
 - b. the sound of a horn
 - c. the explosion of a bomb
 - d. the artillery barrage
7. The starting position of the Newfoundland Regiment in the attack was:
 - a. on the front lines
 - b. near the front lines
 - c. 550 meters from the German trenches
 - d. 230 meters behind the front lines
8. As the Allied soldiers advanced across “No Man’s Land” under fire they:
 - a. ran madly
 - b. marched
 - c. crawled
 - d. strolled
9. The tree that stood in the middle of “No Man’s Land” was called:
 - a. the Danger Tree
 - b. the Hanging Tree
 - c. the Half Way Tree
 - d. the Lone Tree
10. When the Allied attack was finally called off, the number of Newfoundland soldiers who were not casualties numbered:
 - a. 70
 - b. 60
 - c. 65
 - d. 68