

SOME MISSING PAGES

The Black Community In The History Of Quebec And Canada

Activity: A Soldier's Life

A Soldier's Life:

The History of Black Soldiers and their Impact on the Status of Blacks in Canada.

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Introduction

The place: your hometown somewhere in Canada

The year: 1919.

The Great War has just ended and veteran Canadian soldiers are returning home. They are welcomed as the heroes who battled the Great Evil and won. But the memories they bring back are not all glorious. They have toiled, faced death and misery, seen a land laid waste. They learned to live a soldier's life, from barracks to minefields, and developed extraordinary bonds with their fellow soldiers. Among them is a small number of black Canadians. Was their experience of the war the same as that of other soldiers? Are they also welcomed back as Great Heroes?

Your Mission

You are working as a junior newspaper reporter, and your editor has just given you your first major assignment. You are to interview a black soldier who fought in the War and write a human interest story about that soldier's experiences. This is your big chance to see your name appear in a byline on the front page of the paper.... maybe even to get a promotion.

The Process

To complete this Activity, you need to progress through six steps:

1. Skim through the information in Some Missing Pages (use the resource list ([below](#)) to guide you) to get a basic understanding of the WWI period.
 2. Print out the [Question Sheet](#), which contains the ten questions on which you will base your interview.
The first question on the Question Sheet directs you to write down a name for the WWI soldier you are interviewing. Do not use any of the real people's names from the Resources section; instead, create a fictional one. You will find it helpful, however, to base your fictional soldier on actual people and the battles they participated in. So YOUR soldier will be a composite of many people.
 3. Use the [resources](#) from Some Missing Pages to find answers to as many questions on the Question Sheet as you can.
 4. Use the [Additional Resources](#) to complete your information search.
 5. Write your article, based on the information you found in the previous steps.
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Resources from Some Missing Pages

Use the links below or use the Some Missing Pages binder if your classroom has a copy. In the links below, a page number followed by SMP (for example, (20, SMP)) means that you will find the same information in the Some Missing Pages binder on page 20.

Timeline

- [Some Missing Pages Timeline](#): This timeline will help you get an idea of some of the critical historical events that occurred before and after major military conflicts.

World War I Overview

- The [Introduction to Unit Five](#) (99, SMP) provides a quick overview of the role of Black Canadians during WWI. Use it to find evidence that "there was resistance and reluctance on the part of the Canadian government to accept Blacks into the (armed) forces" during WWI, learn about the No.2 Construction Battalion, meet some war heroes, and determine whether government officials recognised the contributions of Black Canadians in the war effort.

Discrimination

According to the Introduction, there was resistance and reluctance on the part of the Canadian government to accept Blacks into the military. Here is some evidence for this claim:

- [A Message from General Headquarters and from the Superintendent of Immigration](#) (78, SMP)
- A [memo](#) (103-104, SMP), the Superintendent of Immigration
- ['Coloured Men Are Barred'](#) (102, SMP) This article from the

Toronto Telegram (August 28, 1918) focuses on the application of Harold Bell to the Royal Air Force

No.2 Construction Battalion

The roads, bridges, and railways needed in the war effort were built by Pioneers and Construction Companies. The No.2 Construction Battalion was the name of one of these companies; formed in July 1916, it was a segregated Black battalion.

- [A recruitment ad](#) (105, SMP) How Black Canadians were encouraged to join the No. 2 Construction Battalion and participate in WWI.
- [The Chaplain of the No. 2 Constructions Battalion, Dr. William Andrew White](#) (108, SMP)
- The officers and men of the No. 2 , (107, SMP) and the battalion's [crest](#) (106, SMP)

The Soldiers of WWI

Meet some of the black soldiers who fought in the First World War.

- [Jerry Jones](#) (111, SMP)
- [Sydney Morgan Jones](#) (78, SMP)
- [Seymour Tyler](#) (113, SMP); [photo](#) (138, SMP).
- [Arthur and William Ware](#) (110, SMP) and the [Alberta home](#) (95, SMP) they grew up in.

After The War

Black soldiers participated in a number of roles in the First World War, despite the resistance and reluctance exhibited by certain public officials.

- [A testimonial letter](#) (115, SMP) from the civic authorities of Montreal to Private William Gale.

Additional Resources

For more information, take a look at the following World Wide Web sites:

- [Canada and the First World War](#)
- [Courage Remembered](#)
- [The whole Kit and Kaboodle: Canadian Military Uniforms](#)
- [The Canadian War Museum](#)
- [World War 1 Trenches on the Web](#)
- [Special selected tours](#); see multimedia collection, soldier's experience
- [The letters of Francis James Mack](#)
- [Floyd Gibbons at Belleau Wood](#) - the famous reporter on getting wounded while covering the US Marine assault

You can also use these books from your local library:

- encyclopaedia articles about WWI and specific battles

- (more book suggestions here)

Ask your history teacher or your librarian for help in finding these and other books.

Evaluation

Your project will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Does your article contain all 10 elements of information?
 - Is your information historically correct?
 - Is your article clear and concise, well organised in paragraphs with well constructed crisp sentences?
 - Did you correct all grammar and spelling mistakes?
 - Is your article interesting, captivating and believable?
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