

Growing Pains Part 3

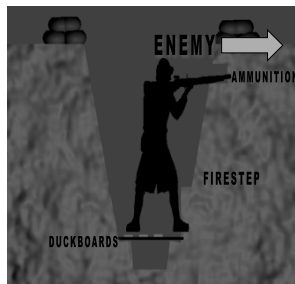
Unit 2 – SS11

Life on the Western Front



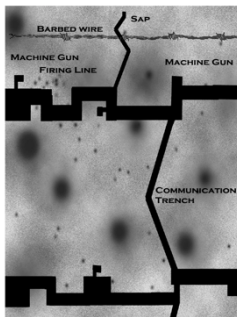
Life in the Trenches

- Front line trenches faced each other across no-man's land.
- They were often wet and rat infested.
- A tour in the trenches usually lasted six days followed by twelve days of respite behind the lines.



Life in the Trenches II

- At night patrols were sent out across no-man's land to probe enemy defenses and cut his barbed wire.
- Dawn often brought attacks when men were ordered "over the top."
- Once into the open ground of no-man's land they were cut down by machine gun and artillery fire.
- The wounded were often left to die where they fell.

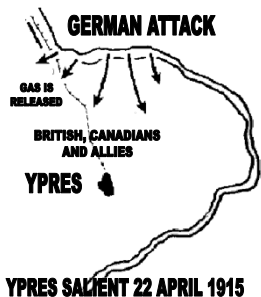


The 2nd Battle of Ypres (April 22, 1915)

- First action seen by Canadian troops
- Canadians in the Ypres salient in April of 1915 were subjected to the first German gas attack with deadly chlorine.
- French colonial troops in the line with the Canadians broke and ran.
- The Canadians held the line for three days suffering terrible casualties (6000)
- Canada was specifically sent to stop Germans from reaching English Channel
- Proved themselves a strong fighting force by facing mustard gas
- Did not retreat; held the line



Ypres Salient 1915



The Battle of Somme



German Helmet

- In July of 1916 nearly 60,000 British troops were killed or wounded in a few hours.
- At Beaumont-Hamel 310 men out of 684 of the Newfoundland Regiment died in a few minutes of an ill planned attack (85%)
- Over 1 million casualties overall
- The campaign on the Somme shattered three Canadian divisions at the cost of 24,029 lives.
- Called the "bloodbath"
- No clear victory; only 11km gained
- Canada was part of the largest offensive in the war along the Somme River, an attempt to win the war
- Set in strategic offensive positions, known to be good fighters

Vimy Ridge – April 9, 1917



- By 1917 Canadians had earned a well deserved reputation as shock troops.
- Vimy Ridge was a German strong point which dominated a vital area of the front.
- Germans captured ridge in initial assault (strategic position)
- Several French and British attacks had failed to drive them from the high ground.
- In April 1917 the Canadians were ordered to take Vimy Ridge.

Vimy Ridge II

- One of the most able subordinates of the British commander was a Canadian named Arthur Currie.
- Currie planned every last detail of the assault including a rolling barrage of artillery, tunneling. This efficient planning and training contributed to the victory
- Led by General Byng (later Lord Byng, Gov-Gen)
- Over 3,500 Canadian lives were lost and 7000 wounded but the Germans were driven from the ridge (French had tried 3 x already)
- Largest victory of the war up to that date and captured more ground, prisoners, artillery than any previous British offensive
- First time all 4 Canadian divisions fought together
- Today, Canada's war memorial stands proudly on Vimy Ridge.



Canadian Troops Returning Victorious from Vimy Ridge



The Battle of Vimy Ridge – Painting by Richard Black, Canadian War Museum

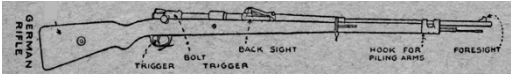


Canada's War Memorial on Vimy Ridge <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rH0Gx30FFyk>



Passchendaele – October 26, 1917

- Arthur Currie predicted that 16,000 Canadians would die in this battle. He led the battle (first Canadian to command our troops)
- Haig insisted they go ahead with the battle regardless
- Canadians were called on because of Vimy
- Passchendaele, one of the worst battlefields of the war, was described as a "featureless desert of yellow mud."
- Mud was so bad that horses and men drowned in it
- 15,654 Canadian soldiers died in the capture of this very questionable military objective.
- Very poorly organized but the Allies still won
- Nearly ½ million soldiers lost on both sides



Passchendaele