

Activity Overview

By conducting online research—as well as consulting with local Legion branches, cadet branches, or local historical societies—students will create a short story, biography, documentary film, song, poem, or other artistic work about a Canadian soldier who lost their life during the First or Second World War. The soldier's experiences and sacrifices can live on through this special tribute, honouring our brave veterans and commemorating those who lost their lives during the world wars.

Learning Objectives

- To gain a deeper understanding of how war and conflict have shaped history, including its impacts and repercussions at home and abroad.
- To use investigative research to create a meaningful, personal connection to Canadian history.

Lesson Plan

Selecting a soldier:

Students may want to choose a family member to research, or they may opt or someone who lived in their community or shares their last name. If your group plans to travel to a battlefield cemetery, they'll want to select a soldier whose gravesite they can visit. Students can search for Canadian soldiers by burial location on the [Commonwealth War Graves website](#).

Researching the soldier's journey:

The Government of Canada's [Virtual War Memorial](#) is a great place to begin. There, students can find the soldier's location of birth, service number, age of death, and more. For some soldiers, the memorial also includes photos and cemetery location information. More information on how to read service files, administrative records of the soldier's career, can be found [here](#).

The following information will be helpful as a starting point:

- Name
- Service number
- Rank
- Regimental name
- Cemetery location

With this information, students can dive deeper into their research using the following resources. They'll want to gather information on both the soldier and the battles they took part in.

First World War: First World War service files can be found [here](#). The Canadian War Museum also offers a [comprehensive overview of the battles](#) that Canadians participated in during the war.

Second World War: Second World War service files can be found [here](#). The Canadian War Museum has also catalogued over [140,000 searchable newspaper clippings](#) from this time period. [The Liberation Route](#) offers lots of information on many battles, as well as guided tours on YouTube.

Although the above sites are valuable online resources, some of the best information may be found at your school or local library. We strongly recommend chatting with a librarian—they're sure to point students toward helpful print resources. We also recommend works by Canadian historians like Tim Cook, Mark Zuehlke, and Jack Granatstein.



Creating the tribute:

After completing their research, students will create an artistic work about their discoveries. Whether it's a short story or narrative biography, documentary film, or song, the first rule for the tribute is simple: Be creative! Here are some other guidelines to help get them started:

- **Short stories, biographies, and poems:** 600 words or less
- **Artwork:** 8.5 x 11 inches or less
- **Songs, films, and other digital media:** 3 minutes or less

An example of a completed Soldier Project can be found [here](#).



Sharing your findings

If you're travelling to a battlefield cemetery, your students may choose to present their projects to their peers at the soldier's gravesite. You may also opt to laminate your class's projects and have students leave them on the grave. Thanks to you and your class, future visitors can learn more about the fallen soldier buried there.

If your class selects soldiers in Groesbeek Cemetery in the Netherlands, we encourage you to submit their projects to [Faces to Graves](#), an organization gathering information to commemorate every person buried there.

Your group can combine this project with the [Grave Etching Activity](#) to take home a memento from your visit. While these activities can be completed separately, completing both creates a more meaningful and immersive experience.



For more information about The Soldier Project or Grave Etching Activity—and how to incorporate them into a WorldStrides Canada program—please speak with your Tour Consultant.