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MARCH/APRIL 2017 $3.85

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TEACH
MAGAZINE

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TEACH is published by 1454119 Ontario Ltd. Printed in Canada. Canadian publication mail sales product agreement No. 195855. ISSN No. 1198-7707.

Happy Spring!

Undoubtedly, you have heard the reporting of "fake news" over the past few months. Initially, many believed that fake news was a fad that would pass. The reality is, fake news stories continue to emerge. Students often turn to their teachers for information on how the Internet works, so it's imperative to distinguish fact from fiction. Our first **Feature Story** looks at the origin of fake news and how it has made its way into the mainstream media. The article covers ways in which educators may teach their students how to determine the truthfulness of articles they read.

Our second **Feature Story** discusses another hot topic: lunchtime and whether teachers should be policing students' lunch boxes. What should you do if a student brings nine cookies to school or if another child only eats dry cereal day in, day out? It's natural for a teacher to be concerned about their students' wellbeing. At the same time, however, they don't want to overstep the role of a parent. It is perfectly acceptable to eat a treat at school, but students should also understand the importance of finding the balance between sugary snacks and nutritious foods. Read on to learn ways teachers can broach this delicate matter without embarrassing or shaming students.

STEM is not just another buzz word. In **Classroom Perspectives**, educator Candy Garner discusses how her school integrated best practices for STEM into classrooms on a daily basis. Students living in rural communities may only aspire to pursue careers to which they are exposed regularly. And while teaching, nursing, and banking are all respectable careers, students shouldn't be limited to these types of choices. Candy details the successes and challenges of her small school district and how it became STEM-certified. She references some innovative class activities such as, students Skyping with deployed military officers to discuss shortages of resources for troops in the Middle East.

Also in the issue is our regular column, **Webstuff**. Read suggestions for new apps that teach environmental science in fun and tangible ways, to students of all ages. Celebrate spring in **Field Trips**, where we present some educational excursions that take advantage of the warm weather and get kids outside. And don't forget to check out **Curricula**. Take a peek at a sample lesson plan that explores the First World War.

Until next time,
Lisa Tran, Associate Editor
@teachmag

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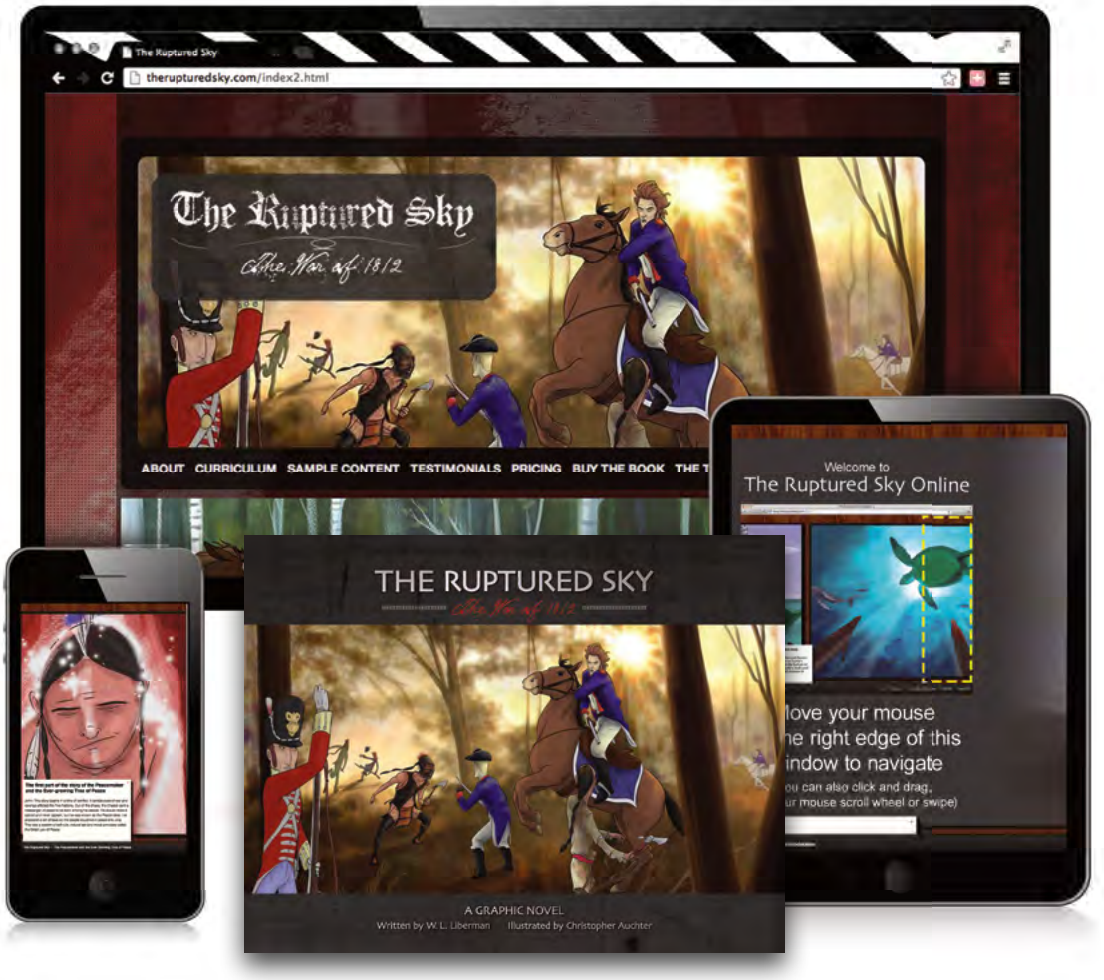

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DISTINGUISHING FACT FROM FICTION

by Meagan Gillmore

People often want to avoid the news because, sometimes, reality hurts. Recently, some want to tune out for other reasons: they doubt the headlines are about real events or that actual people wrote the stories.

"Fake news" is real. It's tricky to define, but it's crucial for teachers to understand. Students often look to teachers for information about how the Internet works. "If they don't get it from teachers, they're not getting it anywhere else," said Matthew Johnson, director of education at MediaSmarts, an Ottawa-based organization that provides media literacy resources. Help is coming for teachers: education programs are offering sessions on the topic. In Ontario, the Association for Media Literacy recently published new tools listing questions people should ask about fake news.

Originally, "fake news" meant stories published to drive traffic to websites so the owners could make money. The information was false; the writers knew this. Their only goal was financial. The term gained popularity during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign—and is now often used to describe hyper-political sites.

"Because the beat evolved so quickly, the term 'fake news' specifically has sort of been devalued," said Jane Lytvynenko, a reporter with BuzzFeed Canada who has been writing about fake news since November 2016. (BuzzFeed avoids the term unless referring to material that fits the original definition, Lytvynenko told *TEACH*. This article uses it throughout to avoid confusion.) The term may be devalued, but the trend matters. "It's an ethical problem," said Johnson. "These stories wouldn't spread if people didn't spread them." They spread on social media, where users are "broadcasters as well as consumers of news," said Johnson. "We have an ethical responsibility to make sure that a story is legitimate before spreading it to our peers."

Digital technology, including social media, has a "click-and-leave" economy, said John Macnab, a high school math teacher in Edmonton. It encourages students to respond quickly to endless information, but no expert helps them determine what's trustworthy. They're incredibly vulnerable, he said. Research agrees.

In November 2016, Stanford University's History Education Group released "Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning." The study evaluated middle-school, high school, and undergraduate students' ability to interpret information online. For example, students were asked to decipher between traditional advertisements, native advertisements (articles that companies pay for, often called

"sponsored content" or "advertorials"), and news articles; or discuss if tweets were reliable sources of information on controversial subjects. Their assessment? "Bleak." "We were taken aback by the students' lack of preparation," the authors wrote, noting they often changed tasks during the development phase to make them easier for students.

Fake news is more than stories. The term is a "rhetorical device" or "code," said Tami Oliphant, who teaches library studies at the University of Alberta. People from all backgrounds use it to describe stories they disagree with or don't like—even if the information's true, reported by established and reputable news organizations. The term creates distrust. People hear something is "fake news" and may assume it's incorrect, even without hearing the news itself.

It's part of a larger trend. Oxford Dictionaries declared "post-truth" 2016's word of the year. The adjective describes circumstances in which "objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." In other words, people use emotions, not facts, to determine truth. Which means to teach about fake news, teachers need to start with facts. This begins by helping students understand real news.

Students often repeat headlines or what they've heard on the radio or television. Their knowledge of a situation is likely not deep, said Jonathan Tilly, a Grade 5/6 teacher at Toronto's Hillcrest Community School who regularly discusses the news with his students. Teachers can't simply encourage students to read past headlines, he said. Articles aren't written for children to understand; if students don't know the context, reading the full piece may not be helpful, he said.

> **Teachers should challenge students to consider why they agree or disagree with information— fake news or otherwise. People are naturally drawn to information that agrees with their beliefs.**

Understanding the news is "like any skill or any art where you have to learn it, and then you play with it," said Tilly. He contributes to ***www.teachingkidsnews.com***. The site, developed by Joyce Grant, a Toronto-based freelance journalist, publishes articles about news events written in kid-friendly language. Articles come with questions, often written by Tilly, that teachers can use to start conversations with students. These conversations need to include explaining the "spectrum" of news, said Joyce Grant.

The spectrum begins with legitimate news articles and opinion pieces, backed with facts. Inaccurate news is next. News organizations make mistakes, but they correct them—and publish corrections. Biased news and satire follow. At the bottom—after click-bait, advertisements and advertorials—are propaganda and deliberate hoaxes or scams. Fake news belongs here, said Grant.

Detecting fake news can be difficult, especially when legitimate news organizations produce satirical programs easily mistaken for news reports. However, there are some key signs a story is fake. Fake news articles often lack sources. People aren't directly quoted; source material for statistics may not be provided. Often, legitimate organizations provide links to source information—fake news doesn't.

Web addresses of fake news stories can provide clues. Grant encourages teachers to look out for sites with ".ru" or ".co" in the address. These stand for Russia and Colombia, respectively. Some addresses deceptively resemble legitimate news organizations, but have an extra .co after the .com. Type suspicious URLs into a search engine. Look for an About Us page on these sites. Search suspicious headlines. If something is true and noteworthy, multiple, respected news organizations will report it. Search images, too.

Teachers, like anyone, should turn to various, reliable sources for news. This can provide more information about a story, and determine what perspectives are missing. Teachers should consider some "non-traditional" sources. Grant consulted with professional journalists when assembling recommendations of trustworthy organizations. Industry titans like *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, BBC and CBC made the cut—along with *Teen Vogue*. (Grant included the latter because of its recent coverage of racism and immigration, she said.)

One organization leading the way in exposing fake news is one often criticized for contributing to the Internet culture that's helped fake news rise—BuzzFeed. It gained popularity through listicles and quizzes, but now has an extensive news division. "Yes, we serve the dessert with our quizzes and our cat posts," said BuzzFeed reporter Jane Lytvynenko, "but we also serve the nutrients or the dinner with our news." It's similar to traditional media publishing horoscopes or travel stories, she said. Her job, like journalists' jobs anywhere, is actually "boring"—it involves many spreadsheets, she said, but no conspiracy theories. "If there is a journalism group chat somewhere out there conspiring against something or for something, I definitely wasn't invited."

These seemingly uninteresting research methods—verifying sources and reading documents carefully—can disrupt what makes fake news powerful: their reliance on instant, emotional responses like fear, outrage, or smugness. These responses are "red flags," said Grant. Fake news needs these reactions to survive; it circulates mainly on social media, a platform where emotional voices gain popularity. "Before you react to it, get in the habit of asking yourself a question," said Jason Harley, who teaches education psychology at the University of Alberta. This can help separate facts from opinion. It also gives people a chance to pause before sharing something.

Teachers should challenge students to consider why they agree or disagree with information— fake news or otherwise. People are naturally drawn to information that agrees with their beliefs. That's not necessarily bad, said Tami Oliphant. People can't digest all available information; they need filters. It becomes dangerous, though, when people never challenge their assumptions, or think critically about what they're consuming. When teachers ask students why they believe certain things, it encourages them to be more reflective, said Oliphant.

Discussing fake news can help students become critical, or skeptical, consumers of news. This means asking good questions, and not letting media "wash over" them, said Grant. However, when tragedies dominate the news—even legitimate news—tuning out everything becomes tempting. This can lead to cynicism, disregarding everything and believing nothing is true, said Harley.

Teachers need to consider students' emotions. That's why many advise against describing fake news as "lies." The stories are lies by definition, but calling them that can stir up more negativity. Teachers need to use this awareness when discussing any tragedy. As a rule, *Teaching Kids News* does not publish articles about violent events. Parents should discuss these events with children, and there is no guarantee a parent will be present when a student is on the site, said Tilly. These topics can't be completely avoided in the classroom either—whether it's talking about history or current events. Tilly tries to be as honest as possible with his students. He tells them he doesn't always understand why certain things happen; that living in a violent world "hurts." But he doesn't want to leave them hopeless and overwhelmed. "I try to encourage in everything that they do, whether it's big or small, that they try to find compassion and kindness," he said. "Because that's what we deserve as individuals, and that's what our world requires." That's especially true in a world of fake news.

Meagan Gillmore is a freelance writer in Toronto, ON.

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Gro Memo

(iOS & Android – $2.79 CAD)

Gro Memo is an eco-educational app that teaches young children basic environmental knowledge and awareness of sustainability issues. Children pair up animated cards that display animals in nature, avoid the pollution cards, and remove the trash cards from the collection. As the environment is cleaned up, the animals become happy in the forest and the sea.

iBiome-Wetland

(iOS – $3.99 CAD)

iBiome Wetland is a five-time award-winning iPad app on biodiversity. Kids can explore three different wetland habitats—freshwater marsh, saltwater marsh, and mangrove swamp. They have tasks in each habitat or "biome", such as identifying

consumers, producers, and environmental factors. Once a task is complete, a new species is unlocked. The species gets placed in a virtual journal, where kids can tap to learn more. Kids can also experiment with their biomes by adding species to see how it affects the biome. The iBiome-Wetland: School Edition includes extra features for teachers, including mapped game levels for measuring progress, access to lesson plans, activities, videos, and more.

Water Cycle HD

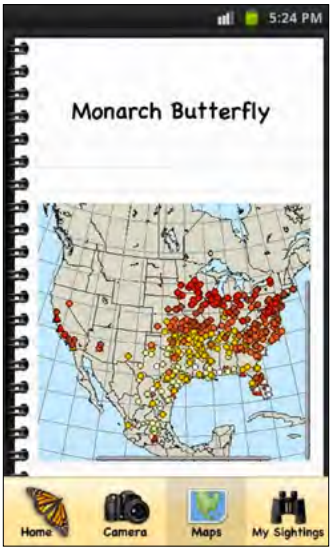
(iOS – $2.79)

Water Cycle HD is an audio-visual exploration of the water cycle. Photos, videos, and descriptive text show how clouds form, how water travels from ocean to land and land to ocean, and how the water cycle impacts life on Earth. The app includes a visual quiz, based on Bloom's taxonomy to test knowledge on the various topics, including easy, intermediate, and advanced questions.

Journey North

(iOS & Android – Free)

Journey North is a free app, suitable for elementary or middle school students that teaches ecosystems, life cycles, and the seasons. The app allows users to record and share field observations about seasonal change with users across North America. Recorded observations may include a variety of indicators, from the length of a day, to a flower blooming, or the presence of a butterfly. It also connects to the website where there are migration maps, pictures, standards-based lesson plans, activities, and information to help students make local observations and fit them into a global context.



THE STEM EFFECT

TRANSFORMING SCHOOLS

by Candy Garner

Certain buzz words and topics come and go in the arena of education. Currently, the word to know is STEM, the acronym for science, technology, engineering, and math.

When asked last year to serve as the STEM/Curriculum Coordinator in my district, I began to read everything I could find on the topic of STEM. I attended conferences and visited schools where STEM professional development was provided. At one such conference, I heard a speaker share statistics relating to how far the United States lagged in college student representation for STEM related fields. My own research confirmed what the speaker had shared. I was suddenly determined to do my part in flipping those numbers. A "Tradition of Excellence" has long been the motto for Winfield City Schools where I am employed. This motto has manifested itself in several forms that includes research-based instructional practices resulting in high academic achievement. As a system, we began to search for ways to integrate best practices for STEM instruction into our classrooms on a daily basis.

In rural communities, students are limited in the career choices they are exposed to regularly. For example, in our community students see teachers, coaches, nurses, and bank tellers as common career choices. While these are all great jobs in respected fields, as educators, we owe it to our students to introduce them to a wide variety of career choices. Teachers should feel obligated to expose students to many different careers, encouraging them to find where and how they can have the greatest, positive impact on the world in which they will work and live. As a faculty, we began to meet in both horizontal and vertical alignment meetings to determine changes we needed to make to better prepare our students for the 21st Century. District-wide, we eliminated the status quo of rows of desks and replaced them with tables and collaborative learning environments. Project-based learning was encouraged as was ongoing STEM challenges. Robotics began in our Pre-K programs and continued with natural progression through the high school grades as students joined competitive rocketry and robotics teams. Dr. Keith Davis, our system superintendent, encouraged teachers to embed STEM in their instruction as a methodology, not just an activity. The engineering design process was used in most classrooms as a guideline for STEM challenges across disciplines.

A common thread during a time of change in any organization is doubt, expressed by some of our faculty members. To help these teachers make a smooth transition into the STEM mindset, STEM boxes were filled and delivered each grading period. The boxes contained activities and supplies to enhance lessons that teachers had planned for their students based on grade level standards. These activities encouraged teachers to use the engineering design process. As a result, they became more confident as they blended traditional instruction with new pedagogical methods. As we embraced these instructional methods, we knew we wanted confirmation that we were, in fact, doing what was needed and what was best for our students.

AdvancED is the largest accrediting service in the world, and our system had been an accredited institution for many years. Recently, AdvancED determined there needed to be a standard procedure to measure if a school was, in fact, a STEM school, providing quality STEM instruction. We opted for our elementary and middle school to go through the

AdvancED STEM Certification process in February of this year. Following rigorous guidelines and submitting much evidence online, a team from AdvancED came to our school to visit our classrooms, our facilities, and met both teachers and students. On February 14th, Winfield Elementary and Winfield Middle School became the first AdvancED STEM Certified schools in the state of Alabama. As a faculty, we are proud of this accomplishment. We know we are providing our students with a quality education that will equip them to be life-long learners in this ever-changing world.

The instructional changes I've described here are only a sampling of what we incorporated into our curriculums. The excitement proved to be contagious. Our high school will be participating in the STEM certification process in the fall. As I make my way down the halls, I am continuously invited by teachers and students to see the things they are doing in class. From first graders coding Bee-Bots to sixth graders Skyping with U.S. military officers to help solve water shortage problems for our troops in Afghanistan, we have proven there is no limit to what can be done by students who are engaged in the learning process. Moving forward it is our goal to welcome visitors from other schools to share the things we have learned thus far on this journey. We are determined to not only equip our students, but to also provide what assistance we can to fellow educators as we all strive to do the best for the students who have been entrusted to us. Our world of tomorrow will be revolutionized by the students of today.

Candy Garner is the STEM/Curriculum Coordinator at Winfield City Schools in Winfield City, Alabama.

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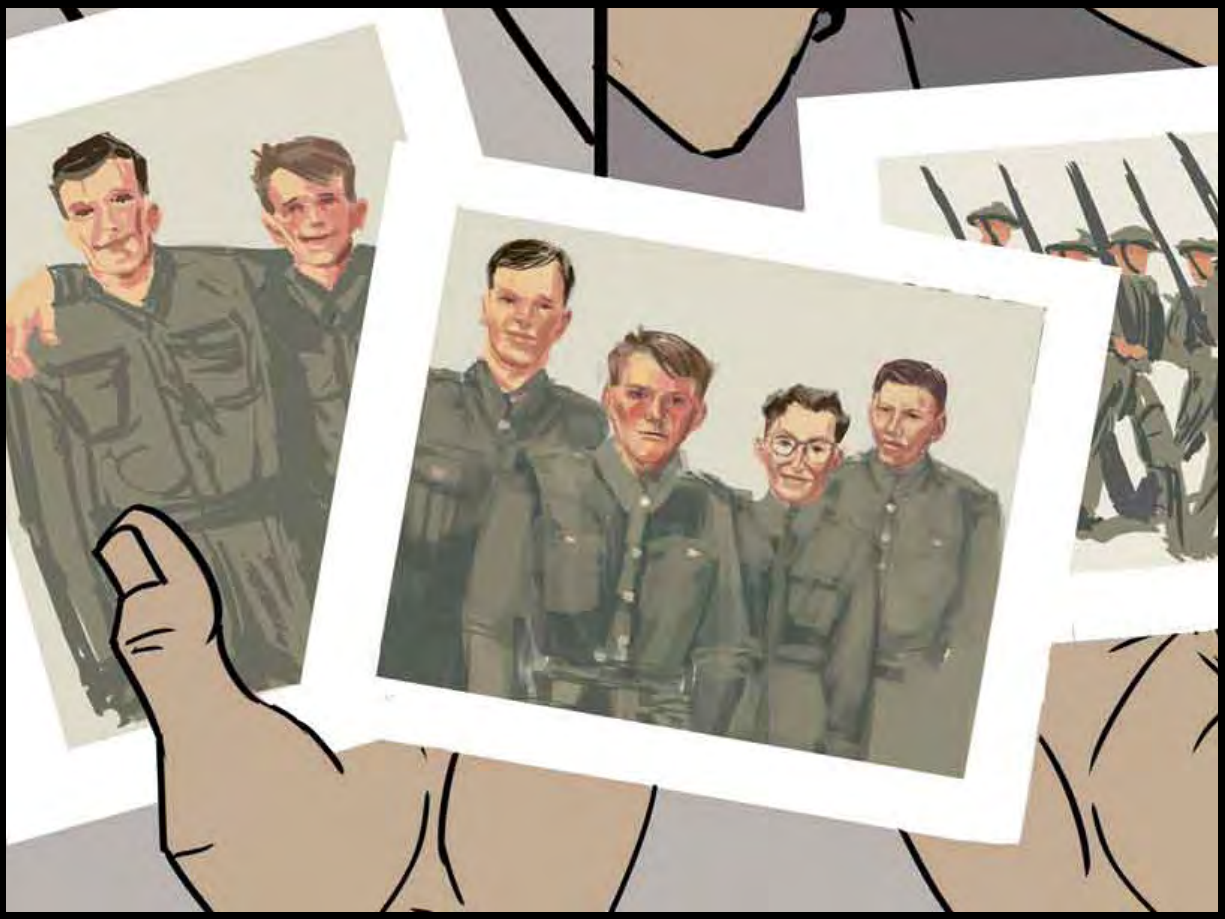

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FOR GRADES
9 TO 12

The following is a lesson plan excerpt from *Shattered Ground*, a free interactive graphic novel and resource. To see the full lesson plan or to learn more, please visit ***theshatteredground.com***.

LESSON 3: The Soldier's Experience

Shattered Ground is an interactive, digital resource that explores the First World War. The narrative follows the story of four young men and their war experiences extending through tragedy and triumph. It is important for students to attempt to put themselves in the footsteps of the youthful characters, to gain the deepest sense of war, what it encompasses and ultimately, its impact on people's lives, on societies, and continents. On the macro level, a major conflict such as the First World War alters the dynamics of nations but also affects people in very personal ways be it injury, loss, or death. The story unfolds in the form of a graphic novel that is available in three formats: interactive, e-book and hard copy. The foundation of the project is rooted in commemorative anniversaries that link back to the beginnings of the First World War and milestone events such as the Battle of Vimy Ridge, for example. In the end, it is important to critically assess what took place all those years ago if only for the purpose of determining how such destructive conflicts may be avoided in the future.

SUBJECTS

History 1900-1919,
Political History,
War and Society

DURATION

3 to 4 classes

INTRODUCTION

The burden of war is borne by the ordinary soldier. Decisions are made at a higher level outside the soldier's realm of influence. Higher ups make those decisions and it is up to the soldiers and their officers, to carry out the tasks they've been given. The First World War elevated conflict to an industrial level where some 50 million men and women put on a uniform and served. Of those 50 million, some 34 million became casualties either wounded, missing in action or killed during the four-year span of time. In Canada, the numbers are equally daunting. Some 59,544 individuals died, 8119 went missing, 2218 soldiers were captured and imprisoned and 172,000 were wounded. In all, total casualties amounted to 231,445. In the beginning, most of the personnel volunteered for service when enthusiasm and excitement reigned. Young men imagined the War to be a great adventure, one that might happen only once in their lifetime. As the war progressed, however, and the level of brutality magnified, attitudes changed. A number of volunteers were also underage having lied about their age. Soldiers as young as 14 or 15 ended up serving at the front. Although these events took place over a century ago, we possess a great deal of documentary evidence in the form of photographs, art and film that captured what took place, revealed in powerful, evocative imagery. This lesson plan probes the common soldier's experience, on both sides of the conflict, if possible. It is ironic, that in many instances, allied soldiers rarely, if ever, saw the enemy. Much of the fighting took place at night. Daytime raids and battles were dangerous. Artillery shells created a thick fog over the landscape making visibility difficult. The weather also played a role. Conditions might be foggy, rainy or snowing and also affected the ability to see. Students will, to the best of their ability, try to gain insight and perspective into experience of those who served on the front lines.

KEY CONCEPTS AND ISSUES

Students will gain insight into the background events of the First World War and explore what brought nations into the conflict. **What were the factors, influences, loyalties, and strategies that compelled countries to engage in battle? What were the messages conveyed to civilian populations by governments concerning their reasons to declare war on their 'enemies'? How did the public respond to this call to action?** From more than a century's perspective, students will critically assess the events that led to the declaration of war, the prevailing reasons, and why it appeared that there was a need to engage militarily on the part of the alliances that developed on either side. Students will then apply this newfound insight and knowledge to current events and conflicts ongoing in various parts of the globe.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- *Shattered Ground* graphic novel
- Computers or devices with Internet access
- The following suggested websites about patriotism and Canadian identity, for background:
  www.thememoryproject.com/stories/WWI
  www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/first-world-war-wwi/
  www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/diaries-letters-stories/first-world-war
  www.thestar.com/news/world/2015/04/22/wwi-soldiers-diary-100th-anniversary-of-gas-attack-on-canadians-at-ypres.html
  www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/ressources/recommended-links/canadian-links
- Materials as required for the preparation of presentations

EXPECTATIONS/OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Gain insight into the individual soldier's experience during the First World War;
- Explore the trauma of war and its long-term impact;
- Describe, if possible, the perceived nature of the Canadian soldier and others who served on the front lines;
- Discover how Canadian soldiers viewed the enemy;
- Explore the post-war experiences of the returning soldier; and
- Communicate their ideas, arguments and conclusions using various formats and styles, as appropriate.

BACKGROUND

Contrary to the common perception of war and the daily duties of the front line soldier, for most troops actual fighting was not the norm. If that was true, then what did soldiers actually do during the day? What is important for students to understand is that the business and mechanics of war requires a vast machine that needs to be constantly stoked. When men weren't fighting, they worked and worked arduously. The daily routine also involved rest and recreation. An army couldn't be worked to the bone as it would lose its military effectiveness. The men needed rest for both morale and physical reasons. Life on the front line

involved mind numbing work and routine, punctuated by episodes of terror and horror when a battle erupted. These extremes took their toll. The military hierarchy was aware of this and the potential effects on the mind and body of the frontline soldier. Recreational activities such as English football or soccer became popular and troops were often rotated out of the front line fairly regularly. Some Canadian soldiers, for example, worked on an 18-day schedule, where six days were spent in the trenches, six days on the front line, and six days rotated out for rest and relaxation. This enabled the military to sustain its efforts in what became a long, drawn out war with a high casualty rate. The life of the individual soldier, no matter how you look at it, certainly wasn't a picnic but then soldiering was never conceived as a job infused with creature comforts.

STEP ONE: TEACHER-LED DISCUSSION

Discuss in class how students perceive the daily life of those on the front lines. In addition to soldiers, there were doctors, nurses, ambulance drivers, some war correspondents, photographers, and cinematographers. There were horses and mules at the front lines, trucks and other vehicles, a range of artillery, and the constant motion of ferrying supplies and munitions back and forth. In some instances, supplies were kept far away and men had to carry basic necessities like food, water, and ammunition a number of kilometres to the front lines. Life on the front for the common soldier involved privation on many levels. See what students perceive and know.

STEP TWO: TRAINING

Most participants in the First World War came from civilian life. Some, undoubtedly, had some previous military training but likely little or no active service. The Permanent Active Militia or PAM as it became known, consisted of a small, permanent military force and existed from the 19th century and eventually became known as the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) then finally, simply, the Canadian Army. Have students research the type and amount of training undertaken by those on active service. **Was the training effective? Did it prepare these novice soldiers for conditions on the frontlines? What were the conditions in the various training facilities? In Canada? In England?** Students will write a short essay on the training received, approximately 750-900 words and submit or post this assignment for the teacher.

STEP THREE: DISCRIMINATION

During the First World War, Canada was not the multicultural nation we know today. Canadian society was predominantly homogenous with most inhabitants having emigrated from the British Isles and Europe. The culture, attitudes, perspectives, and worldview were Euro-centric and the population, primarily white. As Canada housed so many recent immigrants from Great Britain who maintained a strong connection and loyalty to the country of origin, when war erupted, these individuals felt strongly about supporting and coming to the aid of their homeland. It was not for a lack of effort or patriotism that members from the African-Canadian community, First Nations, Chinese, and Japanese attempted to enlist, with little result. It was clear that the white majority wouldn't stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them. Or at least, that was the perception of those in charge of recruiting. The First World War was deemed 'a white man's war' to the exclusion of others. Canada was not alone in this. Allies and enemies alike refused to recruit those of ethnicity including France, Britain, United States, and Germany. Only when casualties on the front began to skyrocket, did the militaries consider appealing to these communities for volunteers. The teacher will divide the class into teams of about four students each. Each team will put together a media-based presentation on the role of culturally diverse community groups, i.e., African-Canadian, First Nations, Chinese, Japanese, for example, and their participation in the First World War. Teams may opt to select

one community group to research. The teams will then present their findings to the class.

Step Four: Losing a Friend

The graphic novel, Shattered Ground, follows the lives of four young men as they navigate through the tensions, tedium, and terror of a major conflict that played out over a long period of time. That fact that these men became comrades in arms, trained together, fought together, lived in the trenches together, ate together, means the relationships became extremely close. The overall casualty rate was high in the First World War and many who survived lost friends and comrades to injury, in battle, to sickness, etc. The relationships formed in War acquire deep meaning and significance through shared experience, something that is difficult for outsiders to understand. Soldiers supported each other, helped each other and sadly, buried each other. In the beginning, young men enlisted enthusiastically, thinking they were about to embark on a great adventure. There was no conception of what was in store with life in the trenches and the sheer industrial scale of death and injury on the battlefield. Nor could anyone predict what role the weather played over large parts of the conflict, torrential rain flooded the terrain causing thick, gooey mud to form, gigantic shell holes filled with water, trenches flooded; lack of shelter, decent food and warmth—all contributing to often miserable conditions in which to live and to fight.

In those days, stoicism prevailed and those who served often didn't talk about their wartime experiences. Recognition of mental health issues wasn't widespread and treatment methodologies were primitive, to say the least. Many suffered in silence or at least, didn't have the awareness or the means to seek help and rehabilitation. Students will write a short story exploring this theme of loss and the emotional impact it had, written from the perspective of an individual in active service on the front line during the First World War. The stories will be handed in to the teacher who may select random samples to read aloud.

Step Five: At War's End

Many Canadian soldiers on the front line rarely, if ever, saw whom they fought against. The trenches may have been separated by wide expanses of hilly land pock-marked by shell craters; sometimes, battles were fought at night and vast artillery barrages left a smoky haze wafting over the battlefield. The weather also played a role—rain, fog, or snow made visibility difficult. Most trenches were protected by barbed wire used to repel or impede enemy attacks. Often, the view of the enemy came sighted down the barrel of a rifle or in close combat when an attack had been ordered. Otherwise, direct contact with the enemy was rare. Aviators met their adversaries in the sky and may have come close enough to recognize faces, but were consumed with engaging in dog fights and avoiding being shot down. Propaganda from both sides portrayed the enemy as evil and inhuman, monsters even, who cared little for human life and whose sole purpose was to kill. Aviators dropped bombs, submarines sank ships, armies fired artillery that devastated the landscape, destroyed villages and towns—a tremendous amount of destruction took place. Feelings of neutrality toward the enemy would have been difficult to maintain. The enemy represented a goal, an obstacle, and a hurdle to overcome. To be successful, an army or navy or air force had to defeat the 'enemy.'

How would soldiers have been viewed by civilian populations at home and abroad? As occupiers or liberators or perhaps a little bit of both? Civilian casualties were abundant. Civilians didn't have the means to defend themselves with weapons or adequate shelter.

Students will take on the role of a civilian or combatant. In this role, they will keep a diary where the entries describe their view of, and thoughts/feelings toward the enemy. They will describe a set of circumstances that have informed this perspective, events that happened to shape their perception and opinion of the 'enemy.' This view and perspective should be based on historical research, however. The diaries will then be handed in to the teacher for assessment. The 'diaries' may be completed in a digital format or written out in the traditional way.

STUDENT EVALUATION QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO THE LESSON PLAN

Before (Pre-Implementation)

Do students have a general understanding of the physical conditions in which the First World War was fought?

Do students have a clear understanding of differences between the opposing sides?

Do students have any prior understanding of the role of combatants in the First World War?

Are students familiar with the responsibilities of government when it comes to addressing issues that affect a soldier's physical and mental well-being?

After (Post-Implementation)

Students will describe the conditions that existed during many of the key battles that took place during the First World War.

Students will reflect an understanding of how the idea of loss affected combatants and civilians at home and abroad during the War.

Students will reflect on, and explain their ideas about the societal impact of the after-effects of War on those who survived to return home.

TEACHER EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Before (Pre-Implementation)

Do you have a general understanding of battle conditions during the First World War?

Do you have a clear understanding of how combatants and civilians were affected by loss during the War years?

Do you have any prior understanding of how enemy combatants were viewed by civilians and soldiers?

After (Post-Implementation)

Describe a sense of the battle conditions during the War years.

Share an understanding of the impact of loss on combatants during the First World War.

Reflect on, and explain your ideas about how the concept of enemy was developed from the Canadian perspective and how the 'enemy' was viewed by civilians and combatants.

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LUNCH POLICE

Should Educators Get Involved?

by Martha Beach

A grade two student shows up to school with dried cereal for lunch. She seems a bit lethargic, though she gobbles the cereal up. She is otherwise happy and doing well academically and socially. But she only brings dried cereal for lunch every single day. What should a teacher do in this situation?

This is what Camelia Marks faced in her grade two French-Immersion class in a lower-income neighbourhood in Toronto. "I didn't know what the situation was," Marks says. So she called the student's dad, told him what she had noticed, and expressed concern. "Turns out [the student] was a really picky eater and wouldn't touch anything except dry cereal," explains Marks. It was either she eats dry cereal at school, or nothing at all. "One day, another kid took out nine cookies! I said 'Just have two. Pack the rest up,'" Marks recalls. "And I called his parents too. Turns out Mom didn't know."

Lunchbox policing and food bans have been a hot topic in the past couple years. There have been news reports, editorials, and blog posts written about apple bans, treat bans, teachers not allowing students to eat certain foods or sending home notes about appropriate snacks. One school in the Peel region of Ontario banned chocolate in any form because of a staff member's reaction to the smell. A primary school in Tasmania, Australia, banned candy canes. Another primary school in Lancashire, England, banned birthday cakes. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Agriculture issued rules that ban schools from offering any type of junk food for sale—even vending machines. A whole school district in Illinois took it one step further this school year and banned all food from classroom celebrations, like Valentine's and birthdays.

Some may think this type of lunchbox regulation goes too far, while others think it's well within the rights of schools and educators to tell students what they can and cannot eat. But eating something, anything, is often better than nothing at all. "The ideal [situation] is to have balanced food groups," says Aviva Allen, family and children's nutritionist in Toronto. "But there are so many reasons why that might not be happening." Maybe produce prices are through the roof and the parents chose to pay the utility bill that month instead of buying spinach and broccoli. "And what about a child who is taking ADHD medications?" Allen continues. "They often cause low hunger throughout the day so the parents just send something easy, something they know their child will eat."

It's important to also remember that the small window of time at lunch may not represent the whole picture. "Just seeing that little snippet of them in the day is not enough to make a judgment," Allen stresses. "There are so many factors. And maybe they ate a totally balanced breakfast then go home and eat a full, balanced dinner."

Allen's main concern is inadvertently causing a child to feel ashamed about something that is likely beyond their control, especially for younger students. "If a teacher starts

policing their food, telling them that what they're eating is bad, they may feel shamed. And then if the teacher sends home a note, it may shame the parent," says Allen. Marks agrees that calling parents is not usually the best route. "I think it's presumptuous of teachers to go head to head with parents. But I also understand that as a teacher you may witness the kids only eating junk," she says, which is a natural cause for concern.

Allen also worries that teaching kids about what's right and wrong in a diet at school may conflict with a family's values or choices. "The Canada food guide [recommends eating] dairy, but maybe the family is dairy-free," she explains. They may be lactose-intolerant or perhaps refrain from dairy products for religious reasons. "It may create confusion."

Instead of teaching specific nutrition guidelines, Marks tries her best to focus on the importance of balance. She is adamant that her students should eat healthy food first, and then their treats. "If they want to get out their chips and Bear Claws and fruit roll up, I say 'no way, that's for after lunch.'" She explains those snacks are mainly salt and sugar and should be eaten after a proper lunch. "It's like having a beer at eight o'clock in the morning—I can't stomach it! But it's fair to have it for dessert," she says. Luckily, her school has a breakfast program that often has leftovers, so if a kid wants to chow down on their Oreos as a morning snack—or maybe they come to school without any snacks—she says 'nope' and hands them a leftover apple.

It's a bold move, but it's something Marks enforces and models. "There are so many times I want to pop a chocolate, but I don't." She usually drinks tea or water and tries not to snack too much on her favourite treat, Doritos. "I'm not against candy, I'm just for appropriate choices and creating balance," says Marks. "I don't want to shame them. But if they're bragging about a Kool-Aid Jammer, I just tell them, 'Actually, it's all sugar.'"

In addition to the food students bring from home, they may also participate in pizza lunches. It's a fun treat for the kids, it probably gives parents a bit of a break, and it's a great fundraiser for the school. "Pizza lunch makes the kids happy and when there's leftovers, it makes the staff happy," shares Marks. Allen helped organized pizza lunches this year at her son's school. "When I first went in there, I initially thought 'This isn't healthy,'" so she tried to make them more nutritious. Originally, the lunches consisted of pizza, pop or juice, and cookies. So Allen began by including carrots, "and not just for the kids who registered, they are for everybody." She also switched cookie providers so they were allergy-safe; but they also contained better ingredients and less packaging. Then the lunch program stopped offering pop. "We kept the juice for now," Allen admits. "It's just two days out of the month. And this is really about teaching the kids about balance—it's okay to have pizza once in a while and you can have a vegetable with it."

Simply telling kids what's healthy and what's not doesn't always do the trick. Experience over time and understanding where products come from are large aspects of developing healthy eating habits. Jessica Jones is a science educator at a high school in West Vancouver. She does a lot of her teaching in a lab, so no food is allowed.

Simply telling kids what's healthy and what's not doesn't always do the trick. Experience over time and understanding where products come from are large aspects of developing healthy eating habits.

"We work with bacteria and fungi and dissections so it's just too gross," Jones says. However, in a regular classroom, students are allowed to snack, though they don't respond well to being lectured about nutrition.

"In theory, it's nice to talk about nutrition, but it's very tricky," Allen cautions. "There should definitely be food and nutrition education. I'm all for learning about how food is grown and where it comes from in nature and how it's so great for us without shaming or judging."

So how should you broach the topic of health and nutrition without becoming the lunchbox constable? Allen highly recommends getting down to the root of food. "Lessons about where food comes from and how it is prepped will more likely inform long-term decisions and it doesn't involve judging them based on what they're bringing." Maybe a field trip to a nearby farm is an option, or perhaps a community farmer's market. Another great way to educate students is through gardening. "We have a community garden, so we do sprout things out there," Marks says. "It's an ongoing learning experience." Allen thinks this type of hands-on work is a great option. "They will remember this when they are done being picky!"

> **… learning about how food is grown and where it comes from in nature and how it's so great for us without shaming or judging.**

Not all schools have the luxury of planting an educational garden or travelling to a farm or fresh market, but there are alternative ways to experience food in a classroom. Students could plant and grow sprouts and veggies inside as part of a science experiment. They could also celebrate and explore culture and nationalities through food. Kids could work on geography by researching what grows where, why, and what are the weather and land conditions. They could even make butter in a jar as part of a history lesson on pioneers.

Jones finds that a good method with her older students is to ask them at the beginning of the year to reflect on their eating and sleeping habits and talk about overall health. "That's done at every grade in the sciences," Jones says. There are countless studies and research that dive into the relation between decreased cognitive function after ingesting high levels of sugar, fats, and salts. Jones does notice a large difference in energy levels in the block right before lunch. She often allows kids a snack at the door in the first five minutes of lab. "Otherwise they seem just so tired and distracted," Jones says. "I'm pretty pro-snacks," Jones says. "I don't really believe an early breakfast and late lunch is really healthy if you want focused, productive students." Students could track their eating habits, maybe turn the data into a graph, and correlate it to their energy levels or their academic performance.

In general, if kids' energy levels are up, they're doing well academically, and they seem happy and social, then trying to police their mid-day meal and snacks may be more trouble than it's worth. Focus on balance and modelling healthy eating habits. Offer alternatives, if available. Incorporate food exploration into lessons. Look into where food comes from, how it is produced, and what its effects are on the body. Focus on positivity to help set students on a healthy road to balanced nutrition.

Martha Beach is a graduate of Ryerson University's journalism program. Currently, she is a freelance writer and factchecker in Toronto.

Nature

Spring is just around the corner! With the temperature rising, it's a perfect time to step out of the classroom and into nature for some hands-on learning. Wildlife ecology, habitat analysis, and fossil examination are just of few of the curriculum-linked topics covered in the field trips below. Time for an exploration adventure!

Photo Source: sepaq.com

Adventures in Education – Conservation Hamilton
Adventures in Education field trips offered by the Hamilton (Ontario) Conservation Authority are available for both elementary and secondary school students. The focus is to provide students with hands-on outdoor environmental education experiences that meet provincial learning expectations. Programs cover topics such as wildlife ecology, forest ecology, habitat analysis, and fossils, rocks, and minerals in depth. For example, in one program, students in grades 1-5 investigate the differences between meadows and forests through examining the interdependency of plants and animals and the relationships between predator and prey, producers, consumers and decomposers. To learn more, visit ***www.conservationhamilton.ca/environmental-education-home***.

Dinosaur Provincial Park
A field trip to Dinosaur Provincial Park in southern Alberta is an experiential, curriculum-connected learning opportunity for students in grades K-12. In "Fossil Investigators", students in grades K-3 hike to a dinosaur bone bed, and have a hands-on opportunity to work with fossils. In "Mystery Quarry Investigation", students take a hike through the Badlands and use observations skills to determine how the animals in the Late Cretaceous Period in Alberta lived and died, followed by related activities. Explore the other programs at ***www.albertaparks.ca/dinosaur/education/school-programs***.

Lynn Canyon Ecology Centre
The Lynn Canyon Ecology Centre, in North Vancouver, BC, offers Spring programs that begin the first week of April. Programs, offered to both elementary and secondary schools, explore habitats and biodiversity. For example, Super Survivors, for grades 1-3, teaches how animals and plants survive in the cool, wet, temperate rainforest. BC Biodiversity, for grades 4-7, explores the concept of biodiversity with a fun indoor introduction followed by a hands-on outdoor field study. Explore all of the programs at ***www.lynncanyonecologycentre.ca***.

Scales Nature Park
Scales is a nature centre with different locations in Ontario that features the most complete live collection of Canadian reptile and amphibian species. Bring your class to Scales for a hands-on, fun-filled day of exploring nature and wildlife. Scales has a range of indoor and outdoor programs available and curriculum-linked activities for grades 1-12, led by knowledgeable staff. The park has 21 hectares of forest, ponds, stream, and trails for the outdoor programs. Check out ***www.scalesnaturepark.ca*** to learn more.

Sépaq
Sépaq in Quebec offers several activities, allowing students from 5-17 years of age to get out of the classroom and explore nature. Activities highlight the natural, cultural, and historical characteristics of each establishment. Recreational packages are available year round. One included program brings national parks inside your classroom. Invite a park warden to your junior secondary classes to give your students a glimpse of the national parks and their history. Students participating in this activity will receive daily family access to the national park of their choice so they can experience the national parks up close and personal. The activity is free of charge for the 4th, 7th and 10th classes coming from your school! To learn more, visit ***www.sepaq.com/activites/scolaire***.

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