

**The Western Front Notes**

3 Major Battles:

- 1) Ypres 1915
- 2) Somme 1916
- 3) Vimy Ridge 1917

**1) Ypres 1915**

- Canadians saw their first action on the front lines
- **Germans used poison gas - Chlorine gas**
  - considered by some to be the **1<sup>st</sup> time a WMD** (weapon of mass destruction) was used
- soldiers choked "like mad dogs in their death agonies"
- Some allied soldiers urinated on their handkerchiefs and used them to cover their mouth and nose
- the ones who did this saved their own lives
- the **Canadians held the line** even though the French and the British were losing ground
- **6000 Canadian casualties**

Feb 25-8:50 AM

**Quote by Private W.C.:**

"Our rifles were jammed and the only machine gun that remained had been clogged with mud...then the enemy broke into the trench further along and started bombing their way toward us. One of our officers...ordered us to surrender and we threw up our hands...Though we held our hands aloft and were now unarmed, the cold-blooded crew started to wipe us out. Three of our men were bayoneted before an officer arrived and saved the rest of us. Even then, our rough captors struck us with their rifle butts and kicked some of our men who were unfortunate enough to be laid out with wounds."

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**2) The Sommes 1916**

- was supposed to be the "Big Push" that would destroy the Germans
- instead it was a **slaughter on both sides**
- Allied deaths - 623907
- German deaths - 660000

**3) Vimy 1917 - Birth of a Nation (April)**

Because of Somme - the allies decide that over the top warfare in the trenches is causing too many casualties

- **General Arthur Currie** - new strategy
- he trained the Canadian forces differently
  - digging tunnels
  - organized and informed soldiers
  - Assault was practiced beforehand

**"Creeping Barrage"**

- Artillery would fire just ahead of the ground troops
- done with the right timing = success
- bad timing meant killing your own soldiers
- while under fire, the Germans would stay hidden,

*Handwritten notes:* 30 000 died → 6 km

Feb 25-8:52 AM

and not expect the enemy to be moving their soldiers at the same time as bombing

- the **Germans were taken by surprise**
- 40000 Canadians left the trenches to carry out this plan
- in 2 days the Germans had retreated because they were overtaken quickly by the Canadians
- only **3600** Canadians were dead
- The rest of the world had come to have a **vlued respect** for the Canadian soldiers
- this led to a feeling of Canadian identity amongst Canadian soldiers
  - before the war Canada was just getting some independence from Britain and it was full of many different cultures
  - after the war, these different cultures had grown closer together and felt more like one unified group: "Canadians"
- some say that this was when :
  - **"A nation was born"**

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Passchendale - October to November 1917

Events- horrible conditions

Role played by Canadians- Canadian's took Passchendale but 16000 Canadians dead/wounded/ or missing

- many bodies were not recovered and still remain under Flanders Field

Importance - 1/4 million casualties

Feb 20-9:25 AM