

A Soldier's Diet 1812: An Army Marches on its Stomach

by Elizabeth Freeman-Shaw

Suggested grade level: Intermediate/Senior

Suggested time: 2 class periods

Brief Description of the Task

This activity is designed to allow students to explore the life of soldiers during the War of 1812 and make comparisons to Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan.

Historical Thinking Concepts

- Use of Evidence (primary & secondary)
- Continuity and Change
- Historical Perspective

Learning Goals

Students will be able to:

- participate in an activity that allows them to understand the concept of continuity and change and historical perspectives
- identify aspects of the life of a soldier during the War of 1812
- use sources (primary and secondary) to make conclusions

Materials

Each student will need copies of the Worksheets (in the Appendices file).

Prior Knowledge

It would be an asset for students to be familiar with:

1. Life in Upper Canada to the War of 1812
2. General events of the War of 1812

3. Some familiarity with Canada's contribution to Afghanistan (through general media coverage)
4. Familiarity with Cause & Consequence; Historical Perspective-Taking, Continuity & Change

Assessment

Students may be evaluated based on the work completed with:

- Worksheet 1 – Continuity and Change
- Worksheet 2 – Historical Perspectives
- Teacher feedback on student discussion
- Extension activities if assigned

Detailed Lesson Plan

Focus Question: Do the lives of soldiers of the past (1812) bear any resemblance to military life today? (Canadian experience in Afghanistan)

Part A: Minds On – Activating Learning: A Soldier's diet

1. The teacher will activate student learning by introducing the theme of a soldier's life through the topic of a soldier's diet.

a. Napoleon Bonaparte, the French leader at the time of the War of 1812, is rumoured to have said, 'An Army marches on its stomach.'

What do you think this means?

Discussion of class should then transition to Canadian forces today.

[Extension: students could read sections of article that looks at Ancient Diets: Lilith Eden 2011."An Army Marches On Its Stomach": An Analysis of the Ancient Soldier's Diet.]

<http://lilitheden.hubpages.com/hub/An-Army-Marches-On-Its-Stomach-An-Analysis-of-the-Ancient-Soldiers-Diet>

b. Ask students what they know about the diet of Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan. (They may have some knowledge about the presence of Tim Hortons in Afghanistan.)

c. Show students streaming video clips on Tim Hortons in Afghanistan. As students watch the clips have them make jot notes on:

- Impact on soldiers
- Differences between different nationalities
- What changes noticed in soldiers
- Why did it open?
- Similarity/Differences to Canadian Tim's

Clip 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwgb2BCpfyU>

Clip 2:

<http://www.globalnews.ca/video/military+mom+reflects+on+tim+hortons+closing+in+afghanistan/video.html?v=2172036291#canada>

2. In discussing the clips, the teacher should highlight the impact that a diet can have on morale, difference in food preferences between different nationalities, and the similarities or differences of Tim Hortons in Afghanistan to Tim Hortons in Canada.

Teacher and students define and/or review historical terminology: Cause & Consequence, Continuity and Change, Historical Perspectives. Depending on whether or not these historical thinking concepts have been addressed previously, it might be helpful to refer to The Historical Thinking Project website for review and/or consolidation: <http://historicalthinking.ca/>

Part B: Action – What did Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan eat?

1. After the initial introduction, the teacher will ask the students to speculate on what members of the armed forces might eat, beyond Tim Hortons.

Discussion should include speculation on eating on the base and during actions in the field. The teacher may consult local Legions for a

veteran of Afghanistan to speak to the class or to act as a resource for this and future components of this activity.

Make some initial conclusions as a class regarding diet, and distinctions based on location. Differentiation may be raised based on military rank – as this will be followed up later. If it does not come up, the teacher might pose the question: Do all members of the armed forces eat the same food?

2. Present students with resources to gather data on the diet of Canadian forces in Afghanistan:

- i. Interview a veteran, OR
- ii. Read articles to gather information on Canadian Forces diet

Examples:

- Lychees and salmon for Canada's desert soldiers,
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/25/us-afghanistan-canada-food-idUSTRE75O0VN20110625>
- When the going gets tough, the tough trade rations. After weeks in the field, Canadian combat and support troops become sick to death of their packaged rations. BY CANWEST NEWS SERVICE JULY 30, 2006
<http://www.canada.com/vancouvernews/news/story.html?id=8cbd7053-d4a2-431c-ab1b-046fe5e10486&k=70346>
- Cooks prep 1400 meals a day in tiny field kitchen
<http://www.army.forces.gc.ca/land-terre/news-nouvelles/story-reportage-eng.asp?id=3472>

Topics/Characteristics that you will want students to highlight are: quality, variety, amount of food, impact of food on soldiers, kitchen/cooking facilities at base and in the field (combat), facilities (tools-stove), distinction based on nationality*

Students may take notes in small groups or pairs first before information is transferred to **Worksheet 1: Continuity and Change** (in Lesson 13 Appendices file)

Teaching Tip:

Teachers may also choose to direct students to an interactive *New York Times* site which allows students to peer inside the MRE [Meal Ready to Eat] packs of multinational forces, including the meal packs for Canadian soldiers,

http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/09/04/weekinreview/20100905_gilbertson.html

3. Consolidate data collected on Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan through whole class discussion – making sure all students have a sufficient understanding and solid foundation to be able to compare the lives of these soldiers to those from 1812.

Part C: Soldiers in 1812 – What did they eat?

1. The teacher instructs students that they will be investigating the diet and other aspects of daily life of soldiers and officers from the War of 1812.

There are many sources that students may use online to collect data about the diet, eating conditions, and kitchens of soldiers during the War of 1812. But teachers may also choose to use a Powerpoint slide show that includes images from Fort York in Toronto, Ontario, to introduce some of this information. (See Lesson 13 Powerpoint - A Soldier's Diet.)

Teachers can supply supplemental information, depending on the needs of the students, or assign students to do further research. A Reference List to assist with this follows.

Reference List

Diet and Food Preparation for the British Army during the War of 1812, by Robert Henderson (<http://www.warof1812.ca/food.htm>)

Messing Arrangements of the British Army during the War of 1812, by Robert Henderson (<http://www.warof1812.ca/messing.htm>)

"A most elegant and superb ball": Hospitality of the 8th Regiment's Officers at the Opening of the War of 1812, by Robert Henderson (<http://www.warof1812.ca/8thmess.htm>.)

Furniture and Utensils of a Soldier's Mess in Barracks, 1812, by Robert Henderson (<http://www.warof1812.ca/utensils.htm>)

Fort George: Celebrating 200 Years – The Roast Beef of Old England, by Ron Dale. *Niagara on the Lake Review Weekly*. Wednesday June 19, 1996

Part D: Consolidating – Assessing Continuity and Change and Historical Perspective

1. Using the information collected, the students will complete **Worksheet 1: Continuity and Change** (in Lesson 13 Appendices file) for the section on 1812. Conclusions should be made regarding Continuity and Change
2. Individually, in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class, students should complete **Worksheet 2: Historical Perspective-Taking** (in Lesson 13 Appendices file). Utilizing information, specifically on dietary and cooking conditions, the students should be able to make informed conclusions regarding the class differences presented in 1812 that are not as evident today.

Extension Activities

Based on time available the students in small groups may research and present another aspect of Life of Soldiers: Today & 1812 and present their own conclusions regarding Continuity and Change and Historical Perspective. Communication of information may include gallery walk, posters, or a web-based presentation.

Some suggested topics include:

- How do soldiers celebrate Christmas?
- What time do soldiers get up? (The daily routine of soldiers)
- What happens if a soldier gets sick? (The medical system at the front)
- How do soldiers practice their religion at the front?
- How do soldiers maintain their family life when at war?

Worksheet 1 – Continuity and Change

Name: _____ Date: _____

Topic: _____

List the characteristics you are comparing in the left column. Title the other two columns with whatever it is you are investigating. This may be two time periods, two documents, two items, two events, etc. Record information that helps you to identify what has changed and what has remained the same.

Characteristic	#1. Canadian Soldiers in Afghanistan	#2. Soldiers 1812

To what degree was there continuity and to what degree was there change between #1 and #2?

Worksheet 2 – Historical Perspective-Taking

Name: _____ Date: _____

What are the event(s) and time period you are investigating?	
List the various groups and people involved, and circle the one that you are recording on this page (use additional pages to record information on others).	
Describe their position/role in society.	Evidence?
How is their position/role different from a similar person or group today?	Evidence?
Compared to what we face today, what relevant circumstances were different for them in the past? (Some examples might include technology, media, economy, religion, family life, communication, recreation, etc.)	
How do you think the above factors influenced their thoughts and/or actions?	