

Canada's Reaction to the Outbreak of War: 1914 and 2001

Concept(s) Historical Perspectives

Exemplary example of Historical Perspectives

Prepared for Grade(s) 10, 11, 12

Province BC

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Time Period(s) 1900-present

Time allotment Two classes of 120 minutes

Brief Description of the Task

Why were Canadians so willing to fight in 1914 in a foreign war that had so little to do with Canada's self-interest? Why in 2001 with Afghanistan War and 2003 with Iraq was there so much opposition to Canadian participation?

This lesson uses primary documents, both visual and text based, to explore Canada's reaction to the outbreak of war in 1914 in contrast to 2001 and 2003. Based on evidence from these sources and the historical context, students explain the perspectives behind Canada's support for the war in one case and opposition in the second and further their understanding of different perspectives when examining historical events.

Objectives

Objectives for Historical Thinking

Students will be able to

1. use several primary sources and historical context to construct an explanation of historical events;
2. use this evidence to give a plausible explanation of the perspectives of historical actors, while avoiding the unwarranted imposition of contemporary values and beliefs on actors in the past;
3. recognize the diversity of historical perspectives.

Required Knowledge & Skills

1. Experience working with primary sources when analyzing a historical event
2. Understanding of the concepts of perspective and reliability in regards to analysis of primary sources
3. The ability to create a historical argument within a formal essay

Detailed Instructions

Lesson 1:

1. On the data projector or overhead, show **ATT 1** and **ATT 2** that give contrasting reactions by Canadians to international wars. The first is taken at midnight in front

of the Toronto *Star* office, Aug. 4, 1914, at the announcement of Britain's declaration of war against Germany. The second is a demonstration in Toronto against sending troops to Afghanistan, 2001. Ask students what they observe in the photos and any background that they know about these events. Initially, give them limited information, perhaps only the date and the context - a declaration of war - so that you can gauge their prior knowledge. Ask them to make some inferences as to how Canadians reacted based on the photos and their prior knowledge.

2. Introduce some more background information and the essential questions for these lessons as follows:

When Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914, Canada too went to war on Britain's side. Moreover, most Canadians showed huge support for their government's decision. More than 33 000 volunteers signed up to fight in the first two months. (Eventually, more than 600 000 joined the armed forces. Canada's population at the time was less than eight million.) Yet the war was far away and had little to do with Canada's self interest. Why were Canadians in 1914 so willing to fight?

In 2001 when American forces went to Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban led government, many Canadians protested. The government did, however, send a small force in support increasing their number substantially in 2006. In 2003 when the U.S. invaded Iraq, there were widespread protests, as many as 200,000 demonstrated in Montréal, and Canada did not to send troops in support. Why were the reactions of Canadians to these foreign wars so different?

(Be sure that students are clear about the different but related wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Students sometimes think that Canadian troops are in Iraq.)

3. Distribute to students multiple copies of **ATT 3 Worksheet for analysing primary sources** (or ask them to make their own version) and one copy of **ATT 4 Primary Sources 1914**. Establish the purpose of studying these sources, to answer the essential question why Canadians were so enthusiastic to fight in 1914. Students should record their findings from the primary sources on the worksheet or, alternatively make their own note-taking tables. Depending on the amount of time available, you may wish to reduce the number of questions students answer and the number of documents.

The first five sources mainly support the interpretation that Canadians supported the war because their identity was so closely linked to that of Britain. The following four documents extend and challenge that interpretation.

Sources 8 and 9, two political cartoons, are worth some special attention. Once students have been able to interpret the contrasting meaning of the cartoons, ask them to note the provenance. Both are by the same cartoonist (who later went on to become one of the most celebrated Canadian political cartoonists of the time) and the same publication, *The Grain Growers' Guide*. However, the anti-war cartoon was done in October and the pro-war cartoon was drawn in November. According to Charles and Cynthia Hou in *Great Canadian Political Cartoons, 1820 to 1914* the

tremendous support for the war on the Prairies pressured the cartoonist to change his opinions.

4. Repeat the analysis of documents from the 21st century on Afghanistan using questions from **ATT 3**. Ask students: What do these sources tell us about Canadians' reaction to outbreak of war in the 21st century? How are they similar and different from the reactions in 1914?

If you wish to supplement these sources, the CBC web site at http://www.cbc.ca/news/features/iraq/antiwar_gallery/index.html has featured articles and a photo gallery on reactions to the anticipated invasion of Iraq in 2003.

5. Class discussion. Share findings in regards to the major differences in Canadians' responses to participation in wars in 1914 and 2001. Also consider the limitations of these sources in providing a full picture of the Canadian responses: what might additional sources be able to tell us?

6. Introduce the concept of historical perspective-taking and **ATT 6 Student Worksheet on Perspective Taking**.

7. In pairs, students will complete historical perspective-taking worksheet. Students can use their notes from their analysis of the primary documents to complete the above worksheet.

8. **ATT 7 Self Assessment** gives an opportunity for students to reflect on their historical thinking.

Lesson 2:

1. Introduce essay topic: Why did Canada react differently to the outbreak of war in 1914 and 2001/2003?

2. Go over assessment criteria for written assignment, **Rubric for Historical Perspective-Taking**.

3. Using their historical perspective-taking worksheet, students will individually write an in-class essay that answers the question.

Outcomes

1. Compare and analyse two (or more) documents from different time periods
2. Through analysis of the documents understand the prevailing norms of both time periods
3. Understand multiple perspectives of historical actors as a key to understanding developments in the past
4. Understand that adopting a historical perspective requires suspending moral judgement and not imposing contemporary views on past events