The battle of Vimy Ridge is one of the greatest battles in Canada's history.

For the first time in the Great War all four Canadian divisions fought together on the same battlefield.

Canadian valour and bravery brought about a fantastic victory not only for Canadians but for the entire Allied force.
The goal of the battle of Vimy Ridge was to achieve a nearly impossible breakthrough in the German lines. It was at Vimy Ridge that the German's heavily fortified Hindenburg Line joined up with many other trenches along the front. Behind the ridge there also lay many German factories which were vital for the construction of munitions and other war materials. In the battle, it was the Canadians' task to take a portion of the ridge and two important hills where the Germans had built strong defences.

Vimy Ridge was a formidable barrier for the Allies to take. A natural hill and barren slope provided little cover for attacking troops and gave a good vantage point for fortified machine guns and artillery to fire on invaders. The Germans had built their own fortifications consisting of three layers of trenches, barbed wire, deep tunnels into the hill, and a light railroad to carry supplies to the front.

The Allied strategy was well planned and extensive preparations were made. Lessons learned in the Somme were used to develop an effective battle plan. Engineers built elaborate tunnels deep under enemy lines, a light railroad was constructed and defended, and heavy artillery was brought in for the creeping barrage. The troops trained on sites behind the front on terrain very similar to that on which they would be fighting.

On April 2, 1917, artillery bombardment was stepped up to wear down enemy soldiers. Before the battle began, more than one million shells had been fired into German trenches. Early in the morning of April 9, 20,000 soldiers attacked in the first wave of fighting in the battle of Vimy Ridge. The Canadians were extremely successful and took the ridge by afternoon. In the next days they achieved all of their objectives.
After three years, the Germans were now driven from Vimy Ridge.

The Canadians had captured more ground, more prisoners and more guns than any previous "British offensive in the war thus far."

It was the greatest Allied victory yet.

Vimy Ridge proved to be a turning point in World War I.

Canadian soldiers were awarded four Victoria Crosses for that single battle.

The Victoria Cross is Canada's highest award for bravery.

The entire Canadian contingent was commended as being an "Elite fighting Corp."

Victory came quickly, but it did not come without cost.

10,602 Canadian casualties; 3,598 dead.

This is a tragic number but it must be compared with the 200,000 Canadian, British, French and German dead who lie buried on the ridge from earlier unsuccessful attacks.

And the Canadians alone lost 24,000 killed or wounded on the Somme the previous year.
Also called the Third Battle of Ypres.

Described as one of the most controversial battles of World War I.

Difficulties arose between the British generals and politicians, all of whom had a different idea on the strategy of war:
- Soldiers knew it was suicide.
- Politicians wanted results.

The battle is still disputed to this day.

The battle of Passchendaele began in July 1917, with a huge barrage of Allied artillery.

This offensive both warned the Germans of the coming attack but it also turned the battlefield into a mess of craters.

With unusually heavy rains, the entire area was transformed into a sea of mud.
- The soldiers slept in the mud, crawled in the mud, fought in the mud, and drowned in the mud, which clogged rifles, ruined food, and rendered artillery useless.
The battle slogged on for months with neither side making progress due to the inhospitable conditions.

In the face of these horrible circumstances Canadian soldiers performed exceptionally and, in the end, were instrumental in securing victory. They were referred to 'Water Rats'.

Through the 3 months of fighting the Canadians established themselves as an elite fighting Corp and received honours reflecting their bravery in battle.

In the end, 9 soldiers received the Victoria Cross in recognition of their outstanding effort at Passchendaele.

Many Canadian soldiers characterized Passchendaele as the most 'dehumanizing' effort in the war.

Tyne Cot Cemetery was referred to 'Black Flight'.

Canadian fighter pilots took to the air over Europe in 1917.

Billy Bishop and Roy Brown are considered Canadian aces.

One-third of pilots died in combat.

Canada lost 1600 men in the skies over Europe.

Canada was known as the Black Flight.

In the end, 9 soldiers received the Victoria Cross in recognition of their outstanding effort at Passchendaele.
Germany perfected the 'unterseebooten' or U-Boat.

A U-boat sank the Lusitania (Titanic's sister ship).

Part of why the USA eventually joined.

Germans used 'unrestricted submarine warfare' as U-boats sank many Allied ships during the war.

Many men and supplies went to Europe.

Canadians also tried to protect ships as they crossed the Atlantic to Britain.

They were always fearful of a submarine attack.

Most goods going to Europe shipped out of Halifax.

IImo and the Mont Blanc collided and the Mont Blanc exploded.

It was the largest explosion until the atomic bomb.

Halifax was flattened.

In the spring of 1918 the Germans mounted offensives to end the war with victory (or at least a draw) on the Western Front before the arrival of the American troops. It very nearly succeeded.

Focused on the weakest part of the British line between Mont St Quentin and Arras and re-gained a lot of lost ground.

Canadians held them back at Amiens.

Using deception (making the Germans believe an attack was happening farther up the line), the Canadians, Australians, and British were able to quickly defeat the German army at Amiens.

The Canadian Corps advanced 12 miles.

The morale of the Germans was badly shaken, but the three days of heavy fighting came at a cost as the Canadian Corps suffered 9,074 casualties.

After Amiens, the Canadians were again sent back to the area around Vimy Ridge, Arras.

Canada's 100 Days - Final Offensives August 8 - November 11
The Canadians were given the task of cracking the Hindenburg Line in Arras. They distinguished themselves and broke through the line across the Canal du Nord. Next, the Canadian Corps captured Cambrai, our last military engagement as an entire fighting force. Our war ended in the Belgian town of Mons. The Canadian troops remained in Europe to share in the Allied occupation. They crossed the Rhine into Germany. Finally, in 1919, the Canadian troops came home where they were greeted by grateful and enthusiastic crowds in cities and villages across the country.

Foresters cut much needed timber in British forests and created airfields for Allied air forces.

Tunnellers worked under very difficult conditions underground, digging extensive tunnel systems, fighting a terrifying underground war and laying and guarding mine charges.

Railway Battalions often underwent fire, laid and maintained most of the British light railway networks on the Western Front.

The Russian Front joining British and Russian forces and even fighting against some Russian Communists.

The armistice brought relief to the whole world. It had truly been a world war. Sixty-five million men from 30 nations were involved in it:

- at least seventeen million men were killed;
- twenty-nine million were wounded, captured or missing;
- the financial cost was measured in hundreds of billions of dollars.

The Great War was also a landmark in Canada's development. In 1914, Canada entered the war as a British colony; in 1918 she was forging ahead to nationhood.

Canada began the war with one division of citizen soldiers under the command of a British general, and ended with a superb fighting force under the command of a Canadian.
for a nation of eight million people Canada’s war effort was remarkable.
619,636 men and women served in the Canadian forces in the First World War;
66,655 gave their lives and 172,950 were wounded.
Nearly one of every ten Canadians who fought in the war did not return.

It was this war record that guaranteed Canada a separate signature on the Peace Treaty ending the war. National status had been achieved.

Nationhood was purchased for Canada by those who stood fast at Ypres, stormed Regina Trench, climbed the heights of Vimy Ridge, captured Passchendaele, and entered Mons on November 11, 1918.