

WHEN WE WERE YOUNG: MAKING DOCUMENTARIES

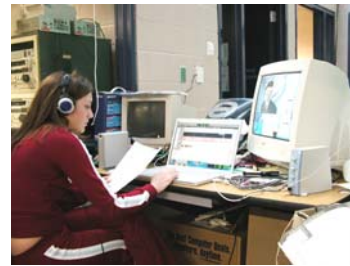
Jerry Berridge & Sheila Hetherington, Unionville, ON



Lights!



Camera!



Action!

INTENDED AGE / SUBJECT

This unit is intended for a grade twelve cross-curricular course, however, the project was originally conceived as a cooperative effort between a grade 10 History class and a grade 11 Communication Technology class. This can also be adapted for Grade 8 provided the class uses less complex software, such as i-Movie, i-Photo and i-DVD, which are easy to learn.

Applicable School Subjects:

History, Communication Technology, Social Studies, Language Arts

Themes:

Discover Your Community, Media & Communication, 1900-1945

Methodology:

- Outside the classroom
- Pedagogy: Constructing knowledge, critical thinking
- Technology in the Classroom
- Cross-curricular Learning

CONCEPTS

- Preserving the historical experiences of our community members
- Canada's participation in World War II
- Conducting primary research using a variety of sources
- Communicating through writing and film by creating a documentary and supporting website

INSTRUCTIONAL OUTCOMES

Students will:

- formulate questions regarding community members' participation in World War II
- use appropriate methods of historical research to locate, gather, evaluate and organize relevant information from a variety of sources;
- interpret and analyse information gathered through research, employing concepts and approaches appropriate to historical inquiry
- communicate the results of historical inquiries, using appropriate terms and concepts through writing and multimedia.

RECOMMENDED TIMEFRAME

This is a semester long course but students usually have the opportunity to create two separate documentaries. The first is a class project and the second is to create in groups of two. Each documentary is given approximately two months. Between documentaries, students are taught essay writing using primary sources using the resources found at the Canadian Mysteries website (<http://www.canadianmysteries.ca>).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This course is designed to allow students to become active historians through authentic, multi-media learning projects. Through these projects and their interactions with various professionals, they will come to understand the relevance and practical applications of the subject of history.

Students will learn to generate focus questions and use a wide variety of inquiry methods to arrive at a well-developed thesis. More importantly, they will undertake a dynamic role in preserving primary sources, such as the memories of those who have participated in historical events, for the benefit of future generations.

Students will have to learn to become critical thinkers and distinguish between biased opinion and fact and come to understand how interpretations can change over time. Additionally students will come to appreciate the importance of how to communicate these findings to various audiences.

The nature of this course is unique because the teacher does not act as the main purveyor of knowledge but rather acts as the facilitator of learning. In other words, the teacher will provide the focus question and interview subjects, the background information to provide structure for the students' inquiry and teach the skills necessary for critical analysis, such as critical reading, critical analysis, and understanding different points of view.

The student will then take over responsibility for his/her learning through their inquiry into their particular subjects life experiences. It will be their job to conduct in-depth research specific to their interviewee in order to produce their documentary. Ultimately, the students will demonstrate their knowledge through their product.

The benefits of this pedagogical approach are numerous. Students will learn the skills necessary to direct their own learning which will prepare them for post-secondary and life-long learning. These include not just inquiry and critical thinking skills but also, time management, group cooperation, communication and presentation skills.

ACTIVITIES

The *Documenting History* course is a two-credit, cross-curricular program that combines History and Communications Technology in order to allow students to create authentic projects focused on preserving the experiences of community members. The students have three major projects to complete throughout the course with a number of smaller projects that contribute to the skill building that is required to complete the projects.

Week	Documenting History	Communications Technology
One	Critical Analysis of a Documentary Detecting Bias in Sources *Reflection: What does Remembrance Day mean to me?	Filming Technique: Camera Work Lighting, Sound
Two	Research Interviews Canadian Warplane Museum	Film Technique: Camera Work, Lighting, Sound
Three	Narrowing the Focus: Choosing a Theme Research/ Interview HMCS Haida Contact NFB for moving images *Annotated Work Cited Due	Logging and Capturing Interviews
Four	Research/ Interview CFB Borden Second Trip to Hamilton Finding and Tracking Images (Using on-line archives) *Research notes and handout should be completed. Sharing of information with other groups	Garage Band Logging and Capturing Interviews Logging and capturing moving images Image cropping/adjustment
Five	Italian Campaign Group – In studio interview In studio interview with CWAC Transcripts and scriptwriting Storyboards Contact CBC for radio clip *Copyright Laws - Test	Music Live Type Logging and Capturing Interviews Logging and capturing moving images Image cropping/adjustment
Six	*Visual Essay Due Editing	Motion
Seven	Editing / Feedback CRTC application	Editing/ Feedback
Eight	Editing *Hand in Video, research notes, storyboards, music cue sheets, images tracking sheet (because of the broadcast, we had actually started to get permission for images prior to the hand in date), release forms.	Editing

Week One

Analyzing Documentary Styles:

To familiarize different types of documentaries, students were shown a couple of different documentary style videos. This included point of view and formal interview style. They must also consider the difference between an “academic” approach and one that is targeting a broader popular audience. What is the balance that they will have to maintain to get their message across to our target audience (other students)? In their documentary groups, students would complete the critical analysis sheet to identify what features and techniques they appreciated and what they found to be distracting.

Analyzing For Bias:

Students learned how to critically analyze primary and secondary sources for bias. Different methods in presenting bias will be considered and students will review a variety of sources and apply their knowledge to identify these bias or perspectives. Students will also consider the purpose of the source and how that is relevant to the tone (i.e. 1941 newspaper versus 2005 scholarly work). How dependable is the source? What will be some of the possible strengths and weaknesses in the quality of information from our interviewees? How do we substantiate that information? Do we substantiate all information used?

Reflections:

Students were asked to write a reflection about how they felt about Remembrance Day. They were asked to avoid all the clichés that automatically come out during this time and really consider what emotions they experienced during that day. The end result was not politically correct, but probably realistic. Most felt some interest, but didn't feel it really had any impact on them since it happened so long ago. This reflection became the jumping off point for our documentary and can be seen in the students' introduction in the documentary. (These reflections can be seen on the website <http://homepage.mac.com/uhscommtech/documentinghistory/Personal56.html>.)

Week Two

Research:

By this point, students will be broken up into different groups based on interpersonal, academic and technological strengths and weaknesses. As a group they will take a look at their assigned topic and create an overview.

For the overview, students are encouraged to use either the Canadian Encyclopedia available through <http://www.histori.ca> or the Juno Beach Centre at <http://www.junobeach.org>. Once the overview is created, students will divide up the research into equal section. Each person will be responsible for created an annotated works cited list that critically analyzes each of their five sources.

In addition, each student is responsible for creating point-form notes for each source (a minimum of one page per secondary source is recommended, primary sources vary). Notes must be properly cited (including the often forgotten page number) and students are encouraged to look for a balance between primary and secondary, book and electronic sources. Students were also told that they would be expected to share their information with their group members, and present it along with handouts to their classmates.

Writing Interview Questions:

Because of the tight timelines, we were forced to have our first interview by the end of the second week. Therefore, the first group had to interview their veteran before their research was completed. This is generally not recommended since students will find it more difficult to ask probing questions if they don't know much about the subject.

For most of the groups, this lesson will not come until week three, but I include it here since the Air Force group had to learn how to write their questions early on. Lessons are presented in small groups rather than given to the class as a whole. This enables topic specific questions, builds greater interpersonal communication between teacher and crew and encourages reluctant students to ask questions.

The students are introduced to different types of questions such as basic fact recall, opinion and criteria-based evaluation questions. They must also carefully consider the wording of the questions and determine which will encourage in depth or detailed answers rather than limited responses.



Canadian Heritage Warplanes Museum:

During the spring, I had called the museum to ask them if we could film our interview on location. The museum usually has a fee for film crews, since they are often used for movies, but through some negotiations we managed to only pay the regular entrance fee. The people at the museum were incredibly helpful. They are experts about the planes and conditions that members of the air force experienced since most are veterans themselves.

For those students who were not filming at this location, they were given some worksheets that could be answered at different stations throughout the museum. I made this up based on the information from the museum's website so those students who did not complete the sheets were able to complete them at home (i.e. those filming or absent).

In the meantime, the film crew quickly scouted the area and picked out the best film shots and interview positions. Originally the Lancaster was outside. Our crew got special permission to film inside the plane, but daylight was too bright for filming. The plane was brought inside the hanger and our veteran from the Markham Stouffville Legion, Harry Bowes, was interviewed with the plane in the background.

It should be noted that whenever possible that students should meet with the veteran prior to the filming to review questions and become comfortable with each other. They often come with many artifacts from their experiences. Harry brought pictures, newspaper clippings and his actual flight log that indicated the various bombing runs that his crew had gone on.

At the museum, he told us about each crew member's job and could point out where they would be positioned in the Lancaster. Also while we were at the museum, we met Joyce Forester who worked for the army entertaining the troops. She offered to meet the students at the HMCS Haida the following week to talk to them about her experiences during the war.

Week Three

Narrowing our focus:

Students continued to research and work on interview questions during the second week. During research, there were a number of times when the students would have difficulties understanding a concept. At these times, small informal lessons would be given. It was probably around this point that we decided on a main theme for our documentary that would help tie the four different projects together. As a class, we discussed how many of the veterans were the same age that the students are now and so we decided our theme would be about when these veterans were young. By making this our focus, we hoped that we could get our target audience, students, to identify with our veterans.

HMCS Haida:

The next film location was aboard the HMCS Haida. This was set up during the summer with Marie-Hélène Renaut at the Canada Marine Discovery Centre/HMCS Haida National Historic Site. Again, everyone was incredibly supportive to our students. The ship was closed to the general public to allow the students to film (without endangering the public with our cords). The ship's crew took those students who were not filming on tours and even operated the torpedoes for them.



Those students who were filming, set up on the deck and interviewed George Lovett, another member of the Markham Stouffville Legion, who served on a variety of different ships during the war including a minesweeper that swept the English Channel prior to D-Day.

After the interview, George agreed to take the film crew on a tour of the ship (see our website <http://homepage.mac.com/uhscommtech/documentinghistory/iMovieTheater52.html>).

Week Four

It's around this time that the two classes begin to become seamless... students will be working on the project in both periods.

CFB Borden:

Permission to film at CFB Borden was obtained over the summer by formally requesting permission from the base commander. CFB Borden is made up of several parts. There is the base museum, training school, and the military community. As background, the base has numerous tanks of various types and our veteran, Bill Scott, was part of a tank crew during the Italian Campaign. He shared his experiences in Africa, the dangerous crossing of the Mediterranean and their landing in Sicily.

The rest of the class quickly toured the museum and then the tanks. Unfortunately, there wasn't nearly enough to keep them occupied for the length of time we were there. Additionally, it turned out that most of our footage shot that day was not usable due to poor sound quality, which was only apparent once we returned to school and reviewed the tapes.

As other groups were well on their way, the Italian crew started to panic. Bill was unable to help us again and since all the research was based on the Italian Campaign, we really needed another veteran who was

involved in that particular invasion. The Markham Stouffville Legion did not have anyone else, so a call was made to the Memory Project (http://www.thememoryproject.com/teaching_speakers.cfm) and we were very promptly given the name of Victor Bulger who agreed to come in at the beginning of the following week.

Women In War:

As mentioned earlier, Joyce had agreed to meet us at the HMCS Haida. One of the groups had women in World War II as their focus. We had been having difficulties finding someone, so Joyce was a bonus. After sitting on the deck with her and listening to her stories, the students asked if they could return to Hamilton and film her at her house. After getting permission from the school and parents, the women's group and I returned to Hamilton. She had generously laid out a table full of food and entertained us with her stories. She had also invited a gentleman friend who had been in the air force and was able to tell us additional stories. The students were so moved by her warmth and charm that they gave her a huge hug before leaving.

Finding and Tracking Images:

The Internet is a great resource for images, and while most students know how to use search engines to find almost anything they want, this particular technique does not ensure that their sources are from the right time period, country or are cleared for copyright.

Before the students started their searches, they had mini lessons on uniforms, equipment and larger weapons. They would have to be able to distinguish a German soldier from a Canadian, or a Canadian from an American or British soldier. Helmets, badges, emblems guns were all examined for distinguishing features.

Next, the students were given a lesson on copyright laws and were shown how to access archives and websites and look for source and reference numbers. If a reference number was not shown, the webmaster had to be contacted to request it. Many of the images on the web are at low resolution. Once they are blown up to full screen size, the picture becomes pixilated. Therefore, in most cases, we had to contact the source to obtain a photo quality picture.

Some sources were amazing, such as Veteran's Affairs which e-mailed the images to us within a day. Other sites, such as the Canada Museum of Science and Technology already had full size picture quality images available on the website. Naturally, since our documentary was going to be broadcast, formal permission had to be requested and credit was given in the final scroll. It should be noted that, even though this project was for educational purposes, permission had to be obtained for all images, interviews, and music because the video would be broadcast on television.

In some cases, a considerable price can be attached to gaining permission. The National Film Board normally charges \$12 per second (yes, per second) for its stock footage. After a bit of begging and the assistance of an angel at the NFB, they graciously waved this fee. Some organizations would not.

Finally, there were many other sources that showed images credited as being from the Library and Archives of Canada. Permission for those images and the ones actually found on the archives' website (<http://www.archives.ca>) were obtained through Crown Copyright and Licensing, Publishing and Depository Services in Public Works and Government Services Canada.

Week Five

Transcripts:

Despite what the students think, an important step in the documentary process, is transcribing the interview into a written format. This enables the group to go through and identify important segments of the interview.

Interviews can be as long as two hours and everything begins to blur after trying to edit for several hours. It is much easier to locate a specific line if it is highlighted with its log number beside it. Sometimes, students will even splice sentences because of rambling sections in between key points. Again, this is much easier when it is indicated on the written page.

Additionally, the computer's hard drive is not large enough to capture such a long interview, numerous pictures, moving images, music and still have space left over for several other classes. Of course, having the transcript is also a very useful assessment tool for the teacher because you get to see what they considered important to the storyline. Sometimes they can be side tracked and may include the humorous, but irrelevant, story over a segment that could be pivotal but they don't yet understand its significance.

Storyboards:

Storyboards are useful for developing the overall storyline. Once the essential lines from the transcript are identified, they can be laid out on the storyboard and some consideration as to which pictures and images would best illustrate what the interviewee is talking about. Students need to determine the balance between the historical images and the contemporary interview. Long periods of the interviewee can be a little dull and this becomes apparent on the storyboard. Students can also insert a text box to make a dramatic point. To be honest, in our case, the storyboard process got thrown out as we found ourselves running out of time.

CBC Radio clip:

After being behind the others and with only three weeks to go, the Italian group got a marvelous interview from Victor Bulger that made it easier to put together a storyline. Inspired by a radio clip that they heard through the CBC website archives (<http://archives.cbc.ca/index.asp?IDLan=1>), they had a good idea for their opening sequence. We tracked down a phone number and got an amazing individual who got us permission to use a radio clip and had a CD of it sent to us by courier within two days. This consistent support from the larger community really helped raise the spirits of the students and validate their efforts.

Canadian Women's Army Corp:

Our last interview was with Margaret Ackroyd who was a CWAC during World War II and the Korean War. A popular and very entertaining speaker, Margaret gave us a pre-interview visit at her home and loaned us a number of photo albums that helped supplement the relatively scarce number of pictures or moving images of women during World War II. During both the women's interviews, it really struck the students that while there were sad times for the women, it was also a period of real adventure and fun. Women's social history became very clear as they realized that these women enjoyed more freedom and felt more useful than they might have if the war had not occurred.

Week Six

Editing:

Once the students had found their storyline, they spent a great deal of time trying to find the right images. To do so requires that they watch hours of video tape or search through hundreds of pictures.

Sometimes they would find the right action but the wrong soldiers were doing it or sometimes it was even the wrong war. At this point, students were often coming to check to see if the pictures were appropriate and it was gratifying to see that they were being 95% accurate.



Once the images were located, they had to be digitized since all editing was on the computer. Pictures were downloaded, uploaded or scanned from a book, but most needed to be cropped or edited with software. All the veterans brought in personal pictures and official papers which were digitized and they came in for additional visits to do voice-overs.

Week Seven

Editing:

Students had to hand in their finished videos by the end of the week for review. All the groups were a long ways from finished, so we had started to work extended hours the week prior. We ate dinner together, people took turns making runs to the coffee shop, and some parents would drop by with care packages. The students worked until 11 o'clock at night when the custodians kicked us out. Then some of them would take the laptop computers that Apple Canada had generously loaned us, go to someone's house and take turns alternating between sleeping and editing. By Friday, every video was completed.

Week Eight

Editing:

Both Jerry and I took a copy of the finished videos home over the weekend and viewed the projects separately, but found that we had similar concerns. There were some technical errors, some minor content problems, but more importantly they didn't seem to quite fit together. We made a list of suggestions to the students which we shared on Monday. They were anything but happy. They had poured their hearts and souls into the project and felt that they had handed in perfection. If nothing else, this course was an incredible lesson in character development because after their initial venting of frustrations, they apologized and went back to work. Again long nights were given, but in the end, they produced something of such quality that it is hard to believe that students created it.

Remembrance Day Assembly:

To share the project with the school, the students came into the night before to set up for an assembly. A large screen was put up, Canadian flags were hanged, and posters were pasted on the walls. We had asked our veterans to return again to share the premiere of the video and to speak to the students about their experiences. The student body was mesmerized. Not a student was wiggling or talking. They gave the veterans the attention and empathy that they deserved. The *Documenting History* students beamed as they watched the veterans they had become rather possessive over.

Those young men and women who went off to war so many years ago had made more of an impact than any traditional academic lesson ever would. Through working so closely with them, they had touched their emotions in a way no textbook could have.

Other Projects:

The students were given another documentary project, but of their subject choice. The only criteria were that it had to have historical elements and they had to have someone to interview. At first, most students didn't think they had anyone to interview but after talking with their families, they discovered that at least one of the partners had relatives with interesting pasts.

Two students interviewed grandparents who had survived the Holocaust, one in Poland and the other in Holland. Another interviewed her grandmother who was a messenger for the underground resistance in Greece while another girl's uncle had been involved in the war in Cyprus. Each had chosen to come to Canada as a refugee and a better life. On the other hand, another girl's grandmother was interned during the war and then sent to Japan even though she had been born in Canada. Even though this country rejected her, she returned to Canada as soon as she was old enough to do so independently. Another story of turmoil was illustrated by a mother who lived in Quebec during the FLQ crisis.

Finally, there is one project that is still going on despite the fact that the course is over. Through our conversations two students became interested in the Chinese Cultural Revolution. They read the story of Nien Cheng who wrote *Life and Death* in Shanghai and was given refuge in Canada when she permanently left China after being imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution.

By tracking her down using the Internet and making a phone call, the students received an invitation from this world-renowned author to interview her in Washington. Using frequent flyer miles, we were able to go to Washington for two days during the Christmas holidays to quickly film our interview (After living in Ottawa for a number of years, she moved to Washington because our weather was hard on the arthritis that she developed while she was being tortured in prison).

To increase our Canadian content and to provide an interesting contrast, we have just recently interviewed Jan Wong, a foreign correspondent for the *Globe and Mail* and the author of *Red China Blues*. In 1972, Jan, as a Chinese Canadian sought to discover her roots and experience the socialism of Mao after her professor at McGill told her how wonderful the Cultural Revolution was. She arrived as an idealist and was one of two westerners allowed to attend the University of Beijing, but she slowly became disillusioned, and even became witness and reporter on the 1989 massacre at Tiananmen Square. Jan is just another example of the wealth of experience that our country's citizens have experienced and bring to the cultural mosaic that is Canada.

RESOURCES / MATERIALS

- <http://www.crtc.gc.ca/canrec/eng/canrec.htm#b1> - Application forms for Canadian Program Certification (if a TV station is willing to air the documentaries)
- <http://www.socan.ca> – Audio Visual Cue Sheet (if you are using music, even as background), information on Copyright Law, 'How-To' articles, etc.

Student work can be found at:

- <http://web.mac.com/uhscommtech/iWeb/8D21295A-E801-4E49-B82D-0E37D6C4D3A9/Welcome%20DH%200405.html> [2005 project]
- <http://web.mac.com/uhscommtech/iWeb/6988873F-B477-4A96-B0D4-69022FEF62DA/99BF53ED-C6C6-49ED-8A3A-F24BE8656A1B.html> [2006 project]

About the Educators

Sheila Hetherington and Jerry Berridge created the cross-curricular course *Documenting History* to encourage students to immerse themselves in history. By applying in-depth research, writing, interviewing and technical film-making skills they can create broadcast quality documentaries. These authentic projects require students to preserve the real life experiences of community members such as WWII veterans in *When We Were Young* which was shown on TVO and was shot on location at the HMCS Haida, The Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum and CFB Borden.

Documenting History Reflection

I would bet if you asked any decent 21st Century teenager, Why do you observe Remembrance Day? they would reply with something along the lines of, Because we owe our respects to those who sacrificed their lives. However, if you took that same student aside and quietly questioned the sincerity of their response, and then gave him or her a moment to really think, I am sure they would be stumped: Wow, I guess I've never actually taken time to really think about it.

To be truthful, my generation is pretty detached; we have been force-fed sympathies and been dictated story upon story of guns and bombs and deaths since before we can remember. We have worn the Poppy and memorized the poems but what is missing is the connection between those symbols and us. We say we remember but what we remember is the In Flanders Fields sing-song from each November 11th in elementary school, and perhaps the image of putting a quarter in a cardboard box in exchange for a fuzzy poppy pin. We really do not remember the blood or the wounds or the hardships of wartime because we just were not there.

Most of us cannot even begin to relate to or draw feelings from statistics like 25,000 casualties in one day. As a human, it is difficult to identify with such an impossibly large number; most of us have never even seen that many people in one room. However, we can identify with one person; with one life, with one story, with one heart and one soul. Those of us who have had the opportunity to speak to one soldier to hear their stories to make the connection between those events that took place and the real emotions that coincide are more likely to have true feelings and opinions about the importance of Remembrance Day. Even if we cannot remember the vibrations of a bombing, or the suffering of a fellow soldier, we can remember the expression on the veterans face while he or she told that story as we watched him or her remember.

We do need to continue to observe Remembrance Day, but the way in which we do so needs modification. Students need to think and ask themselves questions. They need to take time to reflect and then ask each other questions that they might have previously been afraid to ask. They need to look at their own lives, priorities, and schedules and compare them to those of an 18-year-old soldier fighting on enemy lines during WWII. Students need to be given the chance to speak with veterans, and not just be spoken to. Together, we need to close the gap between that which has happened and that which is happening now.



Alyssa

Documenting History Reflection

Memories surface when they are triggered and become slideshows in our mind. It can be a word, a thought, or an object that causes the energy to flood our heads, and recharge the fading star until it burns more vibrantly than before. I was the trigger that allowed my grandfather to weave latent memories of the Second World War into a story that even his son had forgotten, or possibly never heard at all. Hearing about his experiences, and looking into his eyes and watching him relive the memories, affected me more than any textbook or secondhand lecture. He knew what it was like to hear the whistling of a plummeting bomb and the cries of injured comrades. He had the courage to stand tall while explosions penetrated the darkened sky, and the strength to fight amidst decaying bodies. I had no idea that my grandfather was so bold; he was a hero. His stories and pictures showed me both vulnerability and strength sides of my grandfather that I had never seen before. I had not considered him to be a war veteran until I met the veterans who assisted in the production of our documentary, and made the realization that he had taken similar risks and made comparable contributions to help keep Canada free.

It is still hard for me to imagine my grandfather volunteering to fight in a war when he was only seventeen. I try to picture him, with his hair combed to the side and his socks rolled up to his knees, picking up the pen and signing, what was for many, a death warrant. I can not see myself doing this, and because my grandfather lives with me here, in the present, it is difficult to think that he was involved in something that I really know nothing about; something that took place in a time period I have never experienced, and could never place myself in. At the time, the idea of fighting in a war was romanticized. Teenage boys signed up to prove themselves, or to make their fathers and country proud. Or were they just excited to outwit, outplay and outlast the enemy? So the question becomes, why do we observe Remembrance Day? We celebrate Remembrance Day to pay tribute to all of the brave men and women who sacrificed their lives to keep our country free. Honouring those who served Canada during the Second World War is important because it is to them that we owe our freedom.



Petra

