# Editing Traces of the Past to Support Historical Thinking

by

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# ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on the first iteration of a study pursued in the mode of design based research. Produced collaboratively by the researcher and an experienced classroom teacher, the design central to this study engages students in historical inquiry by asking them to produce a documentary video about the Battle of Vimy Ridge (1917). The broad goal of this study was to examine the potential digital video editing offers to promote historical understanding in grade 11 social studies students.

Provided with a media kit containing digitized film materials recorded in camps and trenches of WWI France and Belgium, as well as a other media such as photographs, maps, and music popular during the war years, students were asked to research and produce a historical account of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Students were further tasked with assessing the battle's historical significance for Canadians.

The findings reveal that despite being encouraged to examine and account for multiple perspectives on the significance of this battle, many of the students chose to construct videos that were tributes to fallen soldiers, which only accounted for the "traditional" view of the. Further, findings regarding the use of visual materials in the videos suggest that students made visual selections based on an image's communicative properties as opposed to its historical properties.

What may be done at any time will be done at no time.

Scottish proverb

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father, Archibald MacKellar, who died toward the end of the first term of my Master's coursework. Despite his terminal illness, he insisted I begin this degree and move forward in my career and my life. When I suggested that I could begin the degree any time, my father always with an "old saw" at the ready, told me of the above proverb. A few weeks before he died, he told me he was glad that I heeded his wishes and applied to take this degree. He would be very proud of this thesis and of me for not relegating my education as of those things that *may be done at any time*.

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# 1: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

## 1.1 Introduction

In 1913, Thomas Edison was quoted in the *New York Dramatic Mirror* as having said: “Books will soon be obsolete in the schools. Scholars will soon be instructed through the eye. It is possible to teach every branch of human knowledge with the motion picture. Our school system will be completely changed in ten years" (Saettler, 1968, p. 98).

Edison may have been the first to opine that a particular innovation was certain to revolutionize education, but he was far from the last. Proponents of radio and television made similar claims in the early days of each of those innovations, but one of the more recent innovations to have been so honoured is that of the computer. Just over two decades ago, Seymour Papert suggested that the computer would be “a catalyst of very deep and radical change in the educational system” (quoted in Reiser, 2001, p. 59). The jury may still be out on the likelihood of Papert’s prophecy being realized, but there is no doubt that Edison was well off the mark. Books are far from obsolete and while the use of motion pictures in education is both common and widespread—their use has not supplanted, but instead supports, other more traditional instructional media.

Since shortly after the birth of motion photography in the late 1890s, research has been conducted regarding one aspect or another of learning from motion pictures. However, much of this research has gone out of favour of late,

as it tended to compare the efficacy of one medium to that of another in what has been referred to as a “horse-race approach” (Means & Olson, 1997; Salomon, 2002). Such studies tend to compare one medium to another seeking to determine which is the best, or most efficient means of conveying content and instruction. Salomon likens this style of research to a horse race suggesting, “The horse-race approach…[,] which disregards aptitudes, tasks, contents, and contexts[—]still reigns supreme with the omnipresent conclusion of No Significant Differences” (2002, p. 74).

This type of research is misguided on two counts, the first of which lies in its focus on outcomes. There has been a shift in recent years away from looking at the effects of a particular innovation, instead shifting toward examination of the learning that occurs *with* media as opposed to the results *of* it (D. H. Jonassen & et al., 1994; Salomon, Perkins, & Globerson, 1991). There has also been a swing towards developing technological innovations intended to support and optimize thinking, learning, and teaching (Hannafin, Hannafin, Hooper, Rieber, & Kini, 1996, p. 395).

The other way in which media comparison research is misguided relates to the way in which questions posed by studies of the horse-race variety are predicated upon a technocentric (Papert, 1987) assumption, which asserts that a medium on its own can make a difference in learning outcomes. Speaking of the media comparison research involving computer technology, Papert asserts:

> The context for human development is always a culture, never an isolated technology. In the presence of computers, cultures might change and with them people's ways of learning and thinking. But if

> you want to understand (or influence) the change, you have to centre your attention on the culture-- not on the computer (1987, p. 23).

In an evaluation of media comparison research that later sparked a lively debate in the pages of a special issue of *Educational Technology, Research & Development*, Clark (1985) suggested that in order to assess the comparative effectiveness of a given technology one needed to hold all other variables constant. However, others have convincingly argued that there are simply too many variables in educational research that are beyond a researcher's control. On this topic Berliner asserts:

> Doing science and implementing scientific findings are so difficult in education because humans in schools are embedded in complex and changing networks of social interaction. The participants in those networks have variable power to affect each other from day to day, and the ordinary events of life…all affect doing science in school settings by limiting the generalizability of educational research findings. Compared to designing bridges and circuits or splitting either atoms or genes, the science to help change schools and classrooms is harder to do because context cannot be controlled (2002, p. 19).

Studying a technological innovation in that kind of complex, contextualized environment requires "…a methodology that respects the systemic nature of the classroom, the way this system differs from its controls, and the way it changes over time. The emphasis ought not to be on single events or variables but on the way they relate to each other" (Salomon, 1991, p. 14).

Design-based research (DBR) (Collins, Joseph, & Bielaczyc, 2004; DBRC, 2003) is such a method. DBR takes place in actual learning environments and readily accepts that there are many dependent variables. Instead of attempting

to exclude and control those variables, DBR seeks to identify those which are relevant and to characterize them. As opposed to media comparison research or horse-race paradigm, which merely seeks to see how effective an innovation is, DBR examines how a whole range of designed innovations (such as curricula, activities, scaffolds, and media technologies) function in an authentic setting, and further attempts to address *why* innovations work, as well as for whom and in what contexts.

## 1.2 Literature Review

Within the broad scope of the field of education, two distinct bodies of literature inform this study. The first of these pertains to questions about what (or whose) history should be taught in school, and by what means that is best accomplished. The second—residing within a larger body of literature relating to educational technologies and their potential to support learning—seeks to probe the pedagogical use of digital video as an educational tool of inquiry and expression. After separately introducing each of these bodies of literature, I will address how they intersect within this study.

### 1.2.1 Literature on History Teaching and Learning

In the *Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning* Downey and Levstik (1991) note that research on history teaching is scarce. When Wineburg reviewed the literature for the *Handbook of Educational Psychology* a scant few years later, he found this no longer to be the case

(1996). In the last fifteen years, there has been a dizzying upsurge of research pertaining to instruction in and learning of history.

### 1.2.2 History and the Social Studies

Social studies has been part of the curriculum in Canada for almost a century and during that time there has been considerable variation in how it has been interpreted and the relative importance of history under its auspices (Clark, 2004). Until the late 1990s, the prominence of history in social studies education had been on the decline after a heyday in the 1960s. Several events colluded to push history back to the fore. The first of these, occurring in 1997, involved the dissemination of poll results that had been sponsored by the newly founded Dominion Institute. These results indicated that many young Canadians were unable to recall certain supposedly crucial dates and facts in Canadian history. This poll had surfaced in a climate of heated debate between political and social historians in Canada, with the former charging that the turn to social history had created a situation where Canadians knew very little of their national history. What had begun as a debate primarily among academic historians, ended up in the public sphere in the latter half of the 1990s. When, in the aftermath of a second failed constitutional accord, prominent Canadians Keith Spicer and Joe Clark suggested that the proposed constitutional changes had failed because Canadians had lacked an understanding of their own national history, the debate pushed further into the public consciousness. As a result, calls were made for schools to do a better job of teaching our young more facts about Canada's past (Osborne, 2003).

In 1998, adding tremendous fuel to a growing fire was the appearance of what, in the pages of the Canadian Historical Review, has been referred to as "Granatstein's unsubstantiated polemical romp through the fields of Canadian historiography" (Fecteau, Palmer, & Rudin, 1999, p. 43). Within the pages of the bestselling *Who Killed Canadian History,* Granatstein implicated a number of culprits in the death of Canadian history chief among whom were:

> …social historians, multiculturalists, anti-intellectual bureaucrats and educationists, and trendy child-centred teachers, and that such history as was taught did not deserve the name of history, being only a politically correct celebration of history's victims, told at the expense of the nation building narrative that was essential for the creation of a united and informed citizenry (Osborne, 2003).

In 1999, the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada hosted *Giving the Future a Past*. This event, the first national conference on history education in Canada, attracted individuals from many different professional communities including education faculty members, historians, school history teachers, as well as curriculum specialists, archivists, curators, and the like. At this conference and the one that succeeded it in 2001, the issue of national standards came to the fore, strongly supported by parties wanting to promote a strong national identity and a sense of citizenship. Sitting in opposition were those who argued for what Clark refers to as "…a 'critical disciplinary history' intended to give students a rational approach to dealing with conflicting historical accounts through developing their own interpretations based on thoughtful examination of evidence" (2004, p. 30).

### 1.2.3 Philosophical and Psychological Approaches

Two approaches to research have supported history education. The first is a philosophical approach wherein interested parties have examined the vast body of historiographic materials, or have looked to historical accounts themselves in order to glean a sense of what it is that historians do. A second approach is more psychological in nature and has typically involved empirical research directed towards understanding how it is that one or all of historians, teachers, and students come to understand history (Wineburg, 1996). Focusing on this second approach, I plan to trace some significant developments from the 1960s onward that have shaped the current research in history education.

### 1.2.4 Impact of the Cognitive Revolution

The work of Jerome Bruner in the 1960s is foundational to much current educational research. Born out of the Sputnik crisis, Bruner's report from the Woods Hole Conference documents for many the birth of the "cognitive revolution". In *The Process of Education* (1960), Bruner presents three main ideas which dramatically impacted the New Social Studies movement in the 1960s, first in the United States and then in Canada (Clark, 2004; Fitzgerald, 1983). The points Bruner made forty-odd years ago are relevant to this study in that they continue to be foundational to much of the current research undertaken in history education.

The first point Bruner made relates to the structures of disciplines. According to Bruner, "The teaching and learning of structure, rather than simply the mastery of facts and techniques, is at the centre of the classic problem of

transfer" (p. 12). Bruner suggests that this means, "…giving students an understanding of the fundamental structure of whatever subjects we choose to teach" (p. 11). The second theme from *The Process of Education* relates to "readiness for learning"; Bruner suggests that schools were wasting a lot of time by postponing certain topics while they waited for students to mature to a particular developmental level. He hypothesized "that any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of the development" (p. 33).

Bruner's third point, upon which the previous two rested, forms an assumption upon which much of the current theory and research regarding history education is premised.

> …[I]ntellectual activity anywhere is the same, whether at the frontier of knowledge or in a third-grade classroom. What a scientist does at his desk or in his laboratory…[is] of the same order as what anyone else does….The school boy learning physics is a physicist, and it is easier for him to learn physics behaving like a physicist than doing something else" (p. 14).

Bruner further suggested that learners should follow intuitions, make hypotheses, and then test them out. In short, he proposed education as a process of discovery through inquiry.

#### 1.2.4.1 Cognitive Research Emerging from the United Kingdom

In history education, the first dominant body of research of a cognitive nature emerged from the United Kingdom (UK) in two waves. The first wave, later referred to as the Piaget-Peel-Hallam tradition (Downey & Levstik, 1991) took place in the 1960s and sought to use Piaget's work to develop a model of

the historical conceptual development of children. In short, some researchers asserted that the three Piagetian stages (pre-operational; concrete operational; formal operational) seemed to correspond to stages in the development of historical thinking and understanding in children (Hallam, 1970; Peel, 1967). By the late 1960s and early 1970s, Piagetian researchers faced criticism for trying too hard to slot children's historical conceptual development into their schematic three-stage model of chronological development. One main problem discovered with this line of research was that the finding that "…the three levels could be revealed amongst a group of children of almost any age, because the nature of the evidence and the complexity of the questions influenced children's level of response" (Cooper, 1994, p. 103). Voss further summarizes the early results of this research as follows:

> Early investigators, and in particular Hallam (1967,1972), using a Piagetian framework, concluded that young students were generally unable to engage in formal operations, which did not permit students to think hypothetically in history until they became 14-16 years of age. However, Booth (1987) argued that Piagetian theory placed unnecessary constraints upon student capability and that the Hallam tasks were also restrictive (1998, p. 176).

Some also viewed research in this Piagetian tradition as inappropriate to the discipline of history in that it related to scientific rather than humanistic modes of thought. A final criticism alleged that the model made it far too easy for teachers to jump to rather superficial explanations of what was happening in their history classes (Booth, 1987; Cooper, 1994; Wineburg, 1996).

At the tail end of the Piagetian based research, the UK witnessed what Booth (1994) calls a crisis point in history education. The nature of this crisis

related to the uncertain future of history within the broad curriculum in light of biting criticisms that were being launched at educators and schools. Critics alleged that school history was taught in “an excruciatingly boring manner with far too heavy an emphasis on the content and coverage of British and European political history and on the rote learning and regurgitation of information” (Booth, 1994, p. 62).

In response to these criticisms and questions about whether or not history had a place in the curriculum, there arose in the UK a reform movement that was heavily influenced by Bloom’s *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (1956) and Bruner’s *The Process of Education* (1960). In particular, Coltham and Fines’ *Educational Objectives for the Study of History: A Suggested Framework* (1971), which applied Bloom’s higher levels of cognitive thinking to objectives of history education, appealed to history teachers as it was hoped it would give greater coherence to what was taught while raising expectations and standards (Booth, 1994; Fitzgerald, 1983).

The second wave of cognitive research emerging from the UK largely centres on the *Schools Council History Project* (SCHP), which was a government funded curriculum development project founded at the University of Leeds in 1973. The project had a tremendous scope--it began with 60 participating schools, but later boasted the involvement of 20 percent of the high schools in the UK (Wineburg, 1996).

In a chapter in *The Handbook of Educational Psychology* (Berliner & Calfee, 1996) wherein he reviews the literature regarding the psychology of

history education, Wineburg (1996) says of the project: “Its original mission was a reconsideration of the nature of history and its relevance in secondary schools, but in its totality, the project offered nothing less than a comprehensive model of the psychology of the subject matter”(p. 428). Although the research is not without its problems, several aspects of the project deserve highlight: the project emphasized history as a *form of knowledge* (Hirst, 1974) rather than a body of knowledge to be learned (*Schools Council History Project : A New Look at History*, 1976).

Fitzgerald suggests that what made the project so unique was that it sought:

> …to induct adolescents into a set of four related perspectives: the logic of historical narrative ("change," "continuity," "development," "progress," and "regress"), the evidential foundations of historical accounts, the mysteries of historical explanation ("motive," "cause," "chance," and "contingency"), and some apprehension of history as a humane study concerned to reconstruct and understand the roles of individuals, groups, and institutions (1983, p. 95).

In sum, the SCHP provided an extensive and in-depth examination of adolescent reasoning in history, which fuelled further research into how students understand history and served as a precursor to current ideas of historical thinking.

#### 1.2.4.2 A Resurgence of Research in North America

According to Wilson (2001), inquiries probing topics germane to history education in the 1980s were typically what she calls, “studies of good teachers and teaching” (p. 531). What was conspicuously lacking at that time, especially

given that the ‘Cognitive Revolution’ was in full sway, was a body of research exploring the nature of students’ thinking in history education. This is especially conspicuous given that research of this nature was abundant in other educational disciplines such as math and the sciences (Wineburg, 1996). This is most definitely no longer the case, for while it may have been relatively slow to appear, there is now a considerable body of research that probes various aspects of historical understanding.

Two prominent articles published in the pages of the *American Educational Research Journal* mark the beginning of the North American contribution to this research agenda. The first of these articles was Wineburg’s “On the Reading of Historical Texts: Notes on the Breach between School and Academy” (1991). In this landmark study, Wineburg compared a group of eight historians with eight bright secondary students in order to observe how they approached a historical problem. The participants were all given a batch of artefacts containing a mix of primary and secondary sources that provided conflicting perspectives on a past event. He then had his participants use think aloud protocols so that he might observe how they thought about the materials and the problem they presented—including the questions they were asking and the conclusions they were drawing. Wineburg found that the historians tended to use three main heuristics in order to make sense of the artefacts: *corroboration* (the details of one document were compared to other sources before being taken as trustworthy); *contextualization* (events were situated spatially and temporally); and *sourcing* (using known information about a

document's source to make judgements about integrity and intent before assessing the body of the work). Wineburg's work has been foundational to much of the current research in the field.

The second piece in AERJ, Seixas' "The Community of Inquiry as a Basis for Knowledge and Learning: The Case of History", was theoretical as opposed to research based. As what he expresses is a problem that much of the current research in the field seeks to address, it is worth quoting from Seixas at length:

> What students have too often received, then, is a transformed version of historical products, which appear to have a very different epistemological status from the work of historians. What started as contributions to an active, translucent dialogue among historians characteristically reaches students through their textbooks and teachers in an opaque, authoritative voice, giving facts and explanations about the past. Even where alternative interpretations of the past are presented, they are conveyed with the authority of a community of which the students are not a part (e.g., three theories explaining why the North won the Civil War; two positions on German war guilt). Students are not invited into a community; rather, the voice of the historical text systematically excludes them. If the constructivist theorists are right, there is not much room for real learning here. If the philosophers of history are right, there is not much real history, either (1993, p. 314).

These two articles as well as a special issue of *Educational Psychologist* (Salomon, 1994) are the start of what has become a continuing research agenda. In North America, scholars such as Downey, Levstik, Seixas, Wilson, and Wineburg—joined a number of British researchers who had been working on exploring the concepts of historical understanding and historical empathy that had emerged from the highly successful History 13-16 project in the 1980s.

What has emerged is an international community of researchers probing the nature of learning, teaching, and doing history.

In *Knowing, Teaching, & Learning History (2000)*, Seixas and Wineburg joined with British scholar Peter Stearns in putting together a compendium of work in this area from both sides of the Atlantic. In this volume, the editors suggest that the field has coalesced due to three converging developments. They propose the first of these developments is the "cognitive revolution" (Gardner, 1985) and the concomitant shift away from a behavioural focus in order to centre more on acts of meaning and understanding. The second development, they suggest, has to do with changes that occurred within the discipline of history itself. "Broad public debate over questions of nation, race, gender, culture, and identity have numerous implications for what and how history is taught in schools" (p. 4). The final development they put forward is "…a heightened interest in the problems of historical consciousness, collective memory, and the public presentation of the past" (ibid.).

**Historical Thinking**

The term 'historical thinking' is used extensively in the current literature in the field. It is by no means a new term. While one might think it is a result of the so-called 'Cognitive Revolution', Osborne references a report issued by the American Historical Association 1899, in which the writers, a group of prominent historians suggested, "…the primary purpose of learning history was not the accumulation of knowledge or skills but the development of what they called historical mindedness or historical thinking" (2000, p. 70). Osborne further notes

that while these historians did not explicitly define the term, their report suggested that it meant an understanding that historical perspectives are temporally and culturally situated and that they tended to be fluid and subject to change.

In 1971, Keserich wrote, “For most of us it is probably a truism that history education involves less the acquisition of a set of facts and more a way of thinking, ‘an intellectual pursuit, an activity of the reasoning mind” (p. 18). This continues to be how historical thinking is generally viewed.

#### Domain-Specific Thinking

In the wake of the ‘Cognitive Revolution’ research in Education became more domain-specific. In an issue of *Educational Psychologist* devoted to an exploration of history education, Seixas noted that all of the articles in the issue were premised on the notion that, “…there is something distinctive about the teaching and learning of history, which cannot be known by simply applying general principles of teaching and learning to issues in history education (1994b, p. 107).

#### Comparing Expert and Novice Historians

In many disciplines, it is felt that knowing what expertise looks like allows educators to set realistic goals that are designed to advance their students’ skills and knowledge on a progression that spans from novice to expert. Building on research done in the UK (Shemilt, 1980), for the past fifteen years, North American scholars have been studying the practice of historians in comparison with that of students in order to establish the range of this progression. In

addition to Wineburg's study as described above, Leinhardt and Young (1996) undertook a somewhat similar study in which they recorded the comments of three historians as they were confronted with a series of both familiar and unfamiliar source materials.

#### Historical Thinking and "Doing" History

As outlined above, Bruner asserted, "…there is a continuity between what a scholar does on the forefront of his discipline and what a child does in approaching it for the first time" (1960 p. 28). Although clearly the historical thinking engaged in by students in high school is not, and indeed *cannot* match that of expert historians, educational researchers nonetheless assert that the best way for a student to learn history is to engage in the practices of the discipline (Osborne, 2003; Sandwell, 2003; Seixas, 1993; Wineburg, 1999). Noting that there is often an unnatural separation drawn between method and content in history, Seixas notes that method or "…the `how-to-do-it' is *history*… not something else. Content and pedagogy are inseparable in doing the discipline. Even conceiving of them as two different categories that must be united is no longer helpful" (Seixas, 1999 p. 329). With content and pedagogy thus fused, learning history is thus "doing" history.

#### First and Second Order Concepts

The notion of first and second order concepts in history is one that comes from the British tradition of research, but in the last several years it has become prominent in the North American literature. VanSledright and Limón (2006) present a very simple tripartite framework of the various types of knowledge that

one encounters in the domain of history. First order knowledge entails what is often referred to as 'content'—or the who, what, where, when, and how of past events. Second order knowledge, "…includes concepts and ideas that historical investigators impose on the past to bring some order to its temporally broad and often complex scope" (p. 546). Investigators employ various schemas in order to structure and make sense of the past, these include: chronology, cause and consequence, progress and decline, evidence, primary and secondary sources, and the like. The final element identified by VanSledright and Limón is that of strategic knowledge, which they suggest, "…refers to understandings and applications of the specific practices (sometimes called historical thinking or historical reasoning) investigators engage in when researching the past and building interpretations that result in first-order types of knowledge" (p. 547). This framework builds upon the British model by distinguishing strategic knowledge, or historical thinking, as something that is separate from second order concepts.

**Historical Thinking and Pedagogy**

In order that it might be brought into the classroom and introduced to students, researchers have attempted to translate historical thinking practices into some kind of model which might be followed. There are a number of different models of historical thinking in the literature—the differences between them primarily residing in which second order concepts are highlighted as the most important for students to employ. Below I present, in brief form, three of these models.

#### US National Standards

Administered by the National Center for History in the Schools at the University of California, Los Angeles under the guidance of the National Council for History Standards, the standards of historical thinking and historical understandings include the following: chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research capabilities, and historical issues-analysis and decision-making (NCHS, 1995).

#### 5 C's method

Andrews and Burke (2007) have put forth an approach they refer to as "the five C's of historical thinking" based on all five of the second order concepts involved starting with the letter 'C'. Those concepts are: change over time, context, causality, contingency, and complexity.

#### Benchmarks of Historical Thinking

A project of the Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, the Historica Foundation, and supported by the Canadian Council on Learning, the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking model builds on the work of Lomas (1990) and Holt (1990). This particular model involves five habits or practices: historical significance, working with evidence, identifying continuity and change, analyzing cause and consequence, taking a historical perspective, and understanding the moral dimension of history (Seixas, 2006; Seixas & Peck, 2004).

The strength of these models is that they seek to turn what the research reveals about historical understanding into something practical that can be adopted in the classroom. The danger of these models, however, lies in the ease

with which they might degenerate into a checklist to be followed. Rather than encouraging students to engage in historical thought, it is conceivable that such frameworks might allow those who favour memorization to recite the concepts without actually engaging with them.

#### Historical Significance

Many of the arguments among historians in recent decades have addressed, either directly or indirectly, questions of historical significance. By arguing about what ought to be taken up as a topic of study in history, historians are attempting to tease out exactly what it is that is significant enough to be studied and remembered. "…amidst all this weakening of old certainties, florescence of new themes, and widening of sensibilities… what really and truly matters? What should we pay attention to? What must we neglect?" (McNeill, 1986, p. 5).

An argument put forth by Seixas (1993, 1997; Seixas & Peck, 2004) as well as others (Bradshaw, 2006; Counsell, 2004; Philips, 2002), suggests that if students are to be active learners instead of passive recipients, then they must be allowed—and indeed encouraged—to grapple, just as historians are doing, with complex questions regarding what is and should be considered historically significant.

Of those historical thinking frameworks presented above, historical significance appears as an element of historical thinking in only the last model, but it is a topic that is quite prominent in the literature and has been explored by

a number of researchers (Barton & Levstik, 1998; Cercadillo, 2001; Epstein, 1998; Levstik, 2000; Seixas, 1994a; Yeager, Foster, & Greer, 2002).

I draw attention to this particular second order concept in historical thinking because it features prominently in this study. It will be taken up again in slightly more detail in a subsequent chapter.

#### 1.2.4.3 History and Technology

In concluding his review of the literature for the *Handbook of Educational Psychology,* Wineburg proposed that there were three promising avenues for future research in history education—among that trio, he included efforts that were designed to "explore technology's role in enhancing historical understanding" (1996, p 443).

Several years ago, Whitworth and Berson (2003) undertook a comprehensive analysis of the literature pertaining to the effectiveness of technology in the social studies. Their examination spanned six years and centred on three of the National Council of the Social Studies (NCSS) publications—*Social Education*, *Theory & Research in the Social Studies*, and *Social Studies and the Young Learner.* They conclude:

> As technological advancements have grown over the past few years, a slight emergence of new and innovative uses of technology in the social studies has emerged. Barriers continue to exist in technology infusion in teacher education programs as well as integrating technology in social studies classrooms. The sharing and dissemination of effective ways to overcome these barriers is needed. There is a need for research on the use and effectiveness of technology in social studies classrooms that enhances social studies education (according to the NCSS standards) that goes beyond merely accessing information on the Internet (p. 484).

This analysis undertaken by Whitworth and Berson is useful, but it is highly limited in that it only examined three publications (all of which directly deal with the social studies), but neglected to look at work in other journals that publish works from across the disciplines. In the interdisciplinary field of the Learning Sciences, researchers have been engaged in research examining the ways in which technological innovations might be employed to support learning in various domains, including social studies and history. Indications from some early work undertaken in the 1990s are positive, suggesting that multimedia learning environments are capable of supporting authentic learning (CTGV, 1992; Dwyer, 1994).

At the 2004 International Conference on the Learning Sciences, a panel of scholars representing five design studies described the approaches they were taking in order to develop historical thinking practices through technology supported inquiry (Polman, 2002). By way of canvassing some of the work being done in this area, I will briefly outline three key studies—one which was represented in the aforementioned panel and two that were not.

Saye and Brush (Brush & Saye, 2000; Saye & Brush, 2002, 2007) have spent the last decade investigating how they might support teachers and learner to engage in problem-based historical inquiry. Their research centres on an innovation they call *Decision Point*: *Civil Rights*, which is an integrated collection of over 1000 multimedia content resources and tools for exploring the U.S. Civil Rights Movement . Brush and Saye attempt to use a series of hard and soft

scaffolds in order to help students perceive the complexity of ill-structured problems in history.

*Tracking Canada's Past* (O'Neill, 2007; O'Neill & Weiler, 2006), a design study developed and supervised by Kevin O'Neill at Simon Fraser University, was designed to help students develop a better understanding of history as a discipline through telementoring (O'Neill, 2004). In a curriculum unit that involved students in collaborative research regarding some historical aspect of the Canadian Pacific Railroad of their choosing, volunteer mentors helped learners to form questions and interpret primary sources via a web-based communication application.

*The Sourcer's Apprentice* (Britt, Perfetti, Van Dyke, & Gabrys, 2000) was designed to support students in acquiring better sourcing skills to support them when engaged in historical writing. Developed by Britt and Perfetti at the University of Pittsburgh, this computer-based learning environment was intended to provide high school history students with opportunities to practice document-based reasoning skills.

Clearly, there is a lot of exciting work taking place that involves technology-supported inquiry in high school history education. This study seeks to position itself alongside the design studies described above. However, instead of engaging students in text based production as is the case in each of the three examples given, this inquiry seeks to engage students in digital video production as a means of expressing their understanding in history.

### 1.2.5 Motion Pictures and Education

For much of the 20th century, the development of motion picture technology and the development of the computer ran roughly parallel to one another (Manovich, 2001). In the late 1980s, this situation changed; with the development of digital non-linear editing systems, motion picture technology and the computer converged. In the early years of this convergence, one needed to purchase a complicated system that included proprietary hardware and software and came with a price tag ranging from anywhere in the tens of thousands to well over a hundred thousand dollars (Ohanian, 1998).

In the last few years, this situation has changed dramatically. One might say that moviemaking has been democratized—powerful tools that were once only in the hands of that elite few are now available to anyone with a personal computer and a digital video camera. Since the late 1990s, educational practitioners have begun finding innovative and interesting ways to leverage these technological innovations as a means to improve their students' learning.

#### Media Production Frames

Media production in schools might be framed in one of two very distinct ways. The first of these frames, critical media literacy, is an adaptation of critical literacy as conceptualized by Friere (Hammett, 2000). Advocates of this variety of media literacy, seek to have students to gain a critical awareness of the media messages that surround them on a daily basis. Further, they assert that students need to be conscious of the social, political, and economic purposes that media artefacts have (Hobbs, 1997) and how each of the various media forms might be

used to manipulate those who consume them. Increasingly, the practice of media production is being viewed as an excellent means of achieving this objective of critical awareness. It is argued with increasing frequency, that by producing media messages, students will naturally become more critical media consumers. “In addition to critical viewing skills, critical media pedagogy grounded in the practical work of video production is important for a democratic education. Demystifying television through an understanding of its constructed nature and its processes of selection can be greatly facilitated by actual hands-on production work” (Shutkin, 1990, p. 44).

The second frame for classroom media production, underpinned by constructivist learning theory, views the process of media construction as a powerful tool for exploration and inquiry. For example, Jonassen, Moore, & Marra (2003) assert that, “Producing videos requires learners to be active, constructive, intentional, and cooperative” (p.126). Video projects of this nature align with what Papert referred to as *constructionism* by which Papert meant "learning by making" (1991, p. 1). Like the Piagetian brand of constructivism that it builds on, constructionism asserts that knowledge is not simply transmitted from teacher to student, but actively constructed in the mind of the learner. However constructionism takes things one step further, seeing this act of construction as something that happens best through a process of creation where the learner is actively building or designing an external, shareable artefact such as a computer program, a game, or a sand castle. That shareable artefact then becomes an object with which to think (Papert, 1980, 1991).

### 1.2.6 Literature Relating To Practice

The majority of the literature pertaining to video production in an educational setting has been written by teachers, librarians, and technical coordinators and largely descriptive in nature. The growing number of such articles (the vast majority published in the last five to seven years) indicates rising interest in the field. While not research-based, this body of literature is nonetheless important as it helps to conceptualize the field and indicates some general areas where research would be most beneficial.

### 1.2.7 Media Production Research

Despite having been identified as an innovative means to support learning that showed great potential (D. Jonassen et al., 2003; Means et al., 1993; Seels, Fulllerton, Berry, & Horn, 2004) little academic research has been undertaken that investigates the practice of moviemaking as a tool of learning. The limited academic research to date has been highly exploratory in nature and has related to disciplinary areas outside of the social studies, focusing on language arts and the sciences (Hein & Zollman, 1997; Ranker, 2008; Ross, Yerrick, & Molebash, 2003; Sefton-Green & Parker, 1999).

Two large-scale studies have taken place in the last decade, which help to conceptualize the educational possibilities of video production.

#### 1.2.7.1 BECTA Research in the UK

The first of these is a large-scale pilot study undertaken in the United Kingdom by BECTA, which stands for British Educational Communications

Technology Agency—a government body that was created to support and promote the use of information and communications technology in education. The aim of this DV Pilot project was “to gather evidence of the impact of DV technology on pupils' engagement and behaviours, and to identify models of effective practice” (M. Reid, Burn, & Parker, 2002, p. 6). As a part of the study, fifty schools across the UK were provided with computers, video cameras, and various pieces of editing software. Teachers were given six months to freely use these materials in whatever way they wished, after which time an evaluation was undertaken by two members of the educational arm of the British Film Institute and Andrew Burn of the London Institute of Education.

One of the most useful aspects of this study relates to one of the authors’ key findings regarding certain patterns of use that emerged when they analyzed the various ways in which educators and students made use of DV. These patterns of use identified by Reid, Burn, and Parker coincide with patterns of use noticeable in the literature as well.

**Production vs. Postproduction Mode of Creation**

In addition to the patterns of use, the BECTA pilot also identified two modes of educational production, that provide a useful distinction and one that is particularly relevant to this study. The first mode Reid et al. identify is that which employs a full production process with students recording and then editing their own video materials. The second mode involves the use of “found” or archival materials of some kind rather than the use of the video camera to shoot original

materials. Accordingly, this second mode does not have a production phase, but rather deals primarily with postproduction aspects of moviemaking.

#### *1.2.7.2* Kearney and Schuck's *Students in the Director's Seat*

The other large-scale research project took place in Australia as part of the Apple Classrooms of Tomorrow initiative. This study was a comparative case study that sought to explore the way teachers and students interacted in a production environment. (Kearney & Schuck, 2006; Schuck & Kearney, 2006).

Like the BECTA study, the primary value of this study is in helping to conceptualize the use of video in the classroom. Kearney and Schuck describe the ways in which students and teachers tended to interact in a filmmaking environment as well as how students interacted with other students. They also probed the rationales provided by teachers for using video production in their lessons as well as the pedagogical approaches they adopted.

#### 1.2.7.3 Video Production in Social Studies and History

In the last couple of years, five articles have appeared in one or other of the more prominent peer reviewed journals directed at practitioners. These articles indicated a level of interest in the use of video production specifically as a means of supporting learning in social studies and history. Below, I highlight two of these articles that are the most pertinent to this study.

Ferster, Hammond, and Bull (2006) discuss an online archive and web-based video editing application they have developed which supports historical moviemaking in the classroom. Using PrimaryAccess, students are able to

select from among a collection of primary source materials (photographs, artwork, and documents) and then arrange those artefacts into a sequence.

In an article entitled, “Making History Come Alive” Levin (2003) suggests digital video production as a means of tackling a subject that is sometimes difficult to teach—the holocaust. The article discusses a large-scale project that had high school students shooting and editing interviews with holocaust survivors.

## 1.3 Summary and Research Question

A recent compilation of essays in The *American History Journal* discussed a project at the nexus point between a number of different ‘turns’ that the authors suggest have taken place in the discipline of history in the last number of years. The first such turn is the *pedagogical turn*—or the current interest in the field of history in how students learn to think historically. The second is the *pictorial turn*, which addresses the more common use of images in the construction of historical understanding. Finally, they reference the *digital turn* referring to the use of digital media as a means to develop and express historical discourse (Coventry et al., 2006). These historians further suggest:

> In comparison to more traditional assignments such as term papers, multimedia compositions allow students to use various forms of evidence (text, images, audio clips, and music) to experiment with new forms of critical analysis and narrative. Individual and collaborative multimedia authoring in the classroom—involving multiple skills and points of view and frequently connecting a public audience to student work—resembles, on a much more modest scale, the efforts of historians to develop new forms of scholarship tailored to the digital medium.

It is at this point of convergence between the pedagogical, the pictorial, and the digital that this study is situated. Through this inquiry, I seek to reveal the potential that movie making with archival materials offers as a means to support historical thinking in high school students.

# 2: THE PEDAGOGICAL DESIGN

The design upon which this research study is built is the result of a collaboration between an experienced social studies teacher, and myself—an educational technologist with a background in film and television. Mr. Gagnon and I each independently developed an interest in using video production as a learning tool in social studies. After a third party introduced us, we met in the spring of 2005 to see if our interests and philosophies meshed. It was quickly apparent that we shared a broadly constructivist pedagogical philosophy, that we both had the same kind of classroom activity in mind, and that we shared the belief that the video medium could hold potential as a means of supporting deep learning in the discipline of history. Thus began a collaborative curriculum design project that evolved and grew over a two-year period. Our work on the design has continued beyond this study, as we continue to elaborate and improve the design.

## 2.1 Design Team

Together, Mr. Gagnon and I made a good design team—as we had common interests and complementary strengths. Extremely well read in topics of Canadian history, Mr. Gagnon is a skilled and knowledgeable high school teacher. He holds a Master of Arts in Education, and has acted as head of the social studies departments of two schools in the lower mainland of BC. He has also been a Faculty Associate at Simon Fraser University and a sessional

instructor at the University of British Columbia, and has published a monograph and contributed to a leading compilation volume geared for pre-service teachers.

I, for my part, hail from a completely different background—having worked in the independent film industry in the lower mainland and taught at a vocational film school for about a decade. I entered the film world just as it was impacted by the digital wave, thus while I have both produced and edited 35 and 16mm film projects, much of my experience has been in the realm of digital editing and postproduction[1]. At Vancouver Film School, I taught several courses in the area postproduction including one that helped students learn the art and craft of documentary video editing.

## 2.2 Design Method

Although we followed no specific method in our curriculum planning, our process was not unlike the deliberative method described initially by Schwab (1970) and then elaborated on by Reid (1992) and McCutcheon (1995). Schwab's deliberative curriculum development method suggests that there are a series of four *commonplaces* that designers need to keep in mind when planning learning—teachers, students, discipline, and milieu. These commonplaces, along with other factors, were taken into consideration while we chose the content and form of the design.

[1] The final of three phases of a film or video project that involves art and craft of editing and assembling footage, adding effects, graphics, titles and sound, and finally delivering the finished product.

## 2.3 Design Goals

Mr. Gagnon and I had two broad goals in mind as we collaboratively developed the curriculum for this project. The first was to promote historical thinking in students. Further, Mr. Gagnon wanted to narrow the focus to having students work with the second order concept of historical significance. A second design goal was that of having students confront multiple perspectives on a historical topic thus prompting them to assess their sources and find a way to reconcile these conflicting accounts and make sense of past events.

### 2.3.1 Historical Significance

Seixas (1993) and others (Appleby, 1998; Burke, 1992) have established that the upheavals in the field of history over the last thirty-odd years have been very much about widening and redefining what might be seen as relevant topics for historians to pursue. As McNeill puts it: "…amidst all this weakening of old certainties, florescence of new themes, and widening of sensibilities… what really and truly matters? What should we pay attention to? What must we neglect?" (1986, p. 5). At the core, many of the arguments among historians in recent decades have been indirectly addressing questions of historical significance. By arguing about what ought to be taken up as a topic of study in history—historians are putting forth arguments and attempting to tease out exactly what is significant enough to be studied and remembered.

The argument that is put forth by Seixas (1994a, 1997), as well as others—especially in the UK (Bradshaw, 2006; Counsell, 2004; Philips, 2002), makes evident that if students are to be active learners instead of passive

recipients, then they must be allowed—and indeed encouraged—to grapple, just as historians are doing, with these complex questions regarding what is and should be considered historically significant.

#### 2.3.1.1 Historical Significance Frameworks

There are several frameworks of historical thinking in the literature. Philips, a lecturer in Education at the University of Wales, has a historical significance framework which relates specifically to the First World War (or the Great War as it was formerly known) and builds the criteria into the word 'great' as an organizing frame and mnemonic (2002, p. 16):

**G**roundbreaking
**R**emembered by all
**E**vents that were far reaching
**A**ffected the future
**T**errifying

Christine Counsell, a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge, has also put forth a framework for teaching historical significance in the classroom. Like Phillips' 'GREAT' frame, Counsell's involves a kind of mnemonic—the 5 R's of historical significance. Under Counsell's model (2004) something is significant if it is:

**R**emarkable
**R**emembered
**R**esulting in change
**R**esonant
**R**evealing

The ‘GREAT’ mnemonic is no doubt very helpful for students who are trying to remember the various criteria, the big limitation in the use of this frame, however, lies in the fact that it was tailored specifically for working the First World War and is therefore not portable to other historical topics. Thus continued work with historical significance would require students to learn and become familiar with another set of criteria.

Another such framework is that put forth by Peter Seixas of the Centre for Historical Consciousness at UBC. As briefly touched upon in the literature review, the *Benchmarks of Historical Thinking* (BHT) framework for assessment (Seixas, 2006; Seixas & Peck, 2004) is a collaborative effort that seeks to bridge theory and practice by providing a practical assessment tool for classroom teachers to use when employing historical thinking in their practice.

The BHT framework is based on a series of concepts or ideas that historical investigators impose on the past in order to make sense of it. Under this particular framework, those concepts are: historical significance, working with evidence, identifying continuity and change, analyzing cause and consequence, taking a historical perspective, and understanding the moral dimension of history. Mr. Gagnon was part of an interprovincial team of teachers working on BHT over the span of several years. As much of his broader teaching practice was informed by his work on BHT, it is the framework adopted for this study.

Under the BHT framework for practitioners, the second order historical concept of significance has three main criteria:

1. Resulting in change
2. Revealing
3. Connects to a larger narrative

Counsell's 5 R's and Sexias' BHT tripartite conception of significance are fundamentally very similar. Both of these frames include *resulting in change* and *revealing* as criteria, however Counsell uses the criteria *remembered*, *remarkable* and *resonant*, while Seixas' adds the criteria of being embedded in a larger historical narrative and expands *resulting in change* to include various sub-criteria as per Partington (1980). In addition to working with the specific criteria of the BHT frame, in his practice, Mr. Gagnon also draws on two additional significance criteria—*remembered* and *relevant*. While not one of Counsell's five Rs, *relevance* as Mr. Gagnon works with it is quite similar to Counsell's resonant.

Essentially, these three models—and there are undoubtedly others in use—are all very similar. The terms each use may be different, but they are largely getting at the same basic criteria for assessing why an event or person might be seen as historically significant.

### 2.3.2 Multiple Historical Perspectives

Related to understanding the historical significance of an event is being aware that significance is both something that changes, and something on which there is oftentimes heated debate. To help students develop an understanding that history is something that is constructed, culturally situated, and often contested, our second design goal was to provide students with multiple, and conflicting sources and accounts regarding the historical significance of an event.

## 2.4 What Video Contributes

There are two reasons commonly cited as to why social studies and history teachers use movies to support students' understanding of the past—they bring the past to life, and they are engaging (D'Sa, 2005; Matz & Pingatore, 2005; Weinstein, 2001). Movies—whether dramatic or documentary in nature, provide a window into the past helping students to visualize distant events. Additionally, they are often perceived by students as more interesting that reading from a text. These reasons hold true in this case as well, but with the added dimension that movie making places the learner in the role of active producer of a visual text as opposed to a more passive consumer of one.

In the pages of *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods*, one history educator further suggests that imagery acts to illuminate the past. He selected the word *illuminate* as he suggests images go beyond illustrating to actually shed light on the past. "Images, in short, help students to understand and remember events and ideas, just as words coax deeper meaning from images. When images and words are used together—with images serving words—they help to promote more effective teaching and learning" (Blackey, 2005).

Additionally, cognitive research undertaken in the latter decades of the 20th century has shown that learning is strongest when it supports the learner in drawing connections to prior knowledge. The conundrum is that learning something new oftentimes means there is nothing to which the current learning might be connected. It is further suggested that when learners lack sufficient prior knowledge, information tends to be treated as facts to be memorized rather

than tools to be used. Researchers at Vanderbilt University in the 1990s proposed that video might provide a means of addressing this issue, suggesting that, “video enables students to take a processing shortcut since it directly provides much of the information needed to create a mental model” (Vye & et al., 1990, p. 5).

A final reason for using video is one that is partially perceptual. Research indicates that historical writing is something students find difficult (Greene, 1994; Leinhardt, 2000) and would often prefer to avoid. Movie making is a process that embeds the writing-to-learn process in an activity more likely to appeal to students than essay writing although students are engaging in much the same writing process. Which essentially means they are doing the same work they would to produce an essay, but in the form of a script for a movie project, which might be perceived as a more engaging activity.

## 2.5 Design Pilot

In the school year prior to the one in which the implementation written up in this study was undertaken, Mr. Gagnon and I piloted the design with three of his grade eleven social studies classes. Due to a teacher’s strike that year, our pilot implementation was pushed back until ten days before the Christmas break and restricted to four days in the lab. As a result, a number of the students did not complete videos in which case Mr. Gagnon graded video scripts instead of completed videos.

The pilot was much broader in its focus. Students were given materials from both world wars and allowed to articulate their own question upon which to base their video. While giving students the opportunity to make their own topic choices promoted agency, it also meant a lot of time in the first few classes was taken up with students deciding what to focus on.

After viewing the results, Mr. Gagnon and I agreed that moviemaking showed promise as an activity to learning in history, but that the focus needed to be narrowed . While not all of the students managed to complete a video, some of those who did turned in impressive pieces of work. However, it was clear that we needed to provide more structure in order to make the most of the project. As many of the students had devoted so much of their time to simply coming up with a topic, it was decided that providing students with a focused topic was one way to avoid the initial foundering in which students had engaged.

## 2.6 Why Vimy Ridge?

As we developed the curriculum for this project, we eventually settled on the topic of the Battle of Vimy Ridge as one that both supports and merits deep examination. Our early choices regarding topic had much to do with the availability of visual materials. We settled on World War I as a general topic early on in the development process as the media artefacts were plentiful. An additional consideration was the fact that most of the WWI materials are now in the public domain. Mr. Gagnon further narrowed the topic to Vimy Ridge because of the inherent potential it held as a historical topic rife with conflicting accounts and supporting multiple perspectives regarding its significance.

Another strength of Vimy Ridge as a topic is the way in which the event might be seen to be embedded in several larger narratives—particularly, Canada's road to independence, Canada's international role as peacekeeper, and the continual tensions between French and English speaking populations in Canada (all of which are part of the mandated curriculum in BC).

## 2.7 Overview of the Design

The curricular design that this study centres on has been developed to mesh with the provincially prescribed curriculum for social studies 11. The British Columbia Ministry of Education's prescribed learning outcomes for social studies 11 are organized around four content themes. The learning activity that Mr. Gagnon and I constructed contributes to a greater understanding of aspects of the second content theme--*Autonomy and International Involvement*. Two key aspects of this theme that the activity specifically addresses are Canada's evolution into an independent nation, and Canada's role in the First World War and its impact on the country.

Over a period of five classes, the learning activity asks student to research the Battle of Vimy Ridge, write their own account of what happened during the battle, and produce a documentary video to present this account. In addition to working within the framework of the prescribed provincial curriculum, the design is also intended to promote historical thinking. In particular, the activity has students working with the second order concept of historical significance, applying it to the case of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Students are tasked with assessing the significance of the battle for Canadians today, answering the

question: “Why is the Battle of Vimy Ridge a significant event in Canada’s history?”

Our initial plans had the activity spanning five class blocks, with a break after the first two in order to give students time to complete their scripts and get feedback on them before moving on to the editing stage. In the latter three blocks, students would create a project within Windows Movie Maker™, import their pictures and videos, record their audio scripts, and then use these materials along with titles and effects to realize their scripted plan. Work time was also built into the design at the tail end, giving students the opportunity to put in additional time outside of class in order to complete the project.

## 2.8 Design Elements

As is the case with many design studies, identifying or defining exactly what entails the design can be difficult. As the clearest means of establishing what the design is in this study, I have chosen to present various elements that make up the design.

### 2.8.1 Archival Media Kit

One of the central elements of the design is a kit consisting of a variety of artefacts in different media forms. One of the primary sets of media objects are a series of video clips consisting of pieces of digitized film materials that were recorded between 1915 and 1918 in the allied camps and trenches of France and Belgium. The kit also includes still photographs, maps, sound effects, and a variety of music popular during the war years.

### 2.8.2 Assignment

The assignment tasks students with producing a short historical documentary video that uses the materials in the kit and a voiceover/narration that the students write and record in their own voices. In producing a documentary, students are asked to present an account of what happened during the Battle of Vimy Ridge and then to discuss the significance of this event for Canadians, taking into consideration a number of conflicting perspectives on the topic.

### 2.8.3 Grading

The grading rubric that was devised, placed most of the emphasis on the students' accounts of the battle, and their assessment of its significance over their video making skills. However, the clarity and quality of their videos were also taken into consideration. (See the end of Appendix A for the grading rubric).

### 2.8.4 Context of Production

The imagined audience for the project was the student body in the school. Given that the implementation would take place in October, Mr. Gagnon had arranged for one or more of the completed videos to be played at the school's Remembrance Day observance. Thus, the students were told to consider that their video might be the one screened and to create it with students in other classes and grades in mind.

### 2.8.5 Collaboration

Students were given the opportunity, and actually encouraged to work in groups to produce their videos. However, they were allowed to work individually if they desired it.

## 2.9 Design Constraints

Much of this design has been shaped by the practical realities of determining what materials were available and then working with the technology available in schools, to provide students with access to those materials.

### 2.9.1 Site Constraints

The computer lab in the school where Mr. Gagnon taught houses thirty IBM compatible workstations running Windows XP™ with Service Pack 2, which includes the video editing application Windows Movie Maker 2.1. When checking to learn how much space was available for media storage on each computer, I learned that the answer to this question was rendered moot by the presence on all the computers of a piece of software called Deep Freeze™. Developed in the late 1990s, this software allows network administrators to protect computers from the damage that can occur by users changing settings or downloading unsafe materials. Once Deep Freeze is installed on a workstation, any changes made to the computer are erased as soon as the operating system restarts. Any files added to the computer are lost.

While undoubtedly making the computers safer and the network administrator's job easier, the presence of this software posed an extreme

challenge that had to be overcome in order for any editing to take place in the lab. If the media files could not be stored on the hard drive of the computer—what other sources were available?

Each workstation did have a 500 megabyte allocation of storage space on the network, but the amount of that allotment that was available varied from machine to machine with some stations having as little as 150 megabytes remaining. The workstations also had optical CD-ROM drives and USB 2.0 ports. Although not ideal, the CD-ROM drives proved the only viable option for accessing stored media files from which the students would edit their videos. Thus, it was determined that any materials the students would work with would need to be compressed and stored on CD-ROM.

### 2.9.2 Medium Related Considerations

When we initially began identifying potential historical topics, the availability of media artefacts was a key consideration. As still photography was invented in 1839, and motion photography in 1895, topics that occurred before these times were ruled out. We therefore narrowed our focus to the topics within the grade 10 and 11 core curricula. As there is a provincial standardized test administered at the end of grade 11 social studies, we had hoped to work with grade 10 students where there could be more freedom and flexibility to accommodate the project. However, the availability of archival materials for curriculum topics was also an important factor. After considering a number of possible historical topics, we initially settled on the First and Second World Wars

as topics for which there was an abundance of materials available—and materials that allowed for a Canadian perspective.

### 2.9.3 Archival Media

We initially considered arranging for the students to interview WWII veterans, or perhaps a military historian, if we could track one down. However, we quickly realized that the project was going to take enough time without adding this kind of activity, thus we decided to focus on having the students work with archival film and still photographs in creating their documentaries.

Although it is commonly believed that archival materials are freely available on the web, an exhaustive search revealed that the materials found online were primarily unsuitable, as the copyright status of much of the material was unknown and more important—virtually none of it was from a Canadian perspective. The National Film Board (NFB) has an extensive collection of materials involving Canadians in the First World War. While these materials have technically fallen into the public domain, the NFB typically charges fees for providing access to these materials. Mr. Gagnon had done some research prior to our first meeting and as he sat on a number of history education committees at the national level, knew whom to contact within the NFB to make a request for the use of WWI film materials. The response to his message was quick and positive—they would send him a selection of digitized WWI filmstrips free of charge.

At this point, our design still included WWII topics. Most of the available materials on the Second World War were in collections held by Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and were free. However, LAC charges a service charge for each batch of materials collected and put onto DVD. With no budget for this project, we wanted to keep such expenses to a minimum, thus obtaining more than a couple of sets of media from LAC was cost prohibitive. It was later on, after an initial pilot of the design (discussed above) that we decided to focus strictly on World War I.

The materials from the National Film Board arrived on six DVDs. Each disc contained a compilation of various filmstrips that had been digitized and then encoded to DVD. In order to turn the media on the DVDs into materials the students could edit with, the raw video files needed to be *ripped* from the DVDs and then converted into an editable video container file.

### 2.9.4 Media Reduction

After watching all of the materials, it became apparent that there was simply too much material for students to handle. Even without the constraint of needing to fit all the media on a CD-ROM, it was unreasonable to expect students to watch all of the material, much less to have the skills to be able assess the materials for pieces that they could extract and use.

Additionally, the use of CD-ROMs for the storage of media files in video editing is a little unorthodox. In order for the editing process to be successful

using this method, the individual files on the disc would need to kept reasonably short to facilitate playback.

### 2.9.5 Pre-Editing as Scaffolding

First, the files had to be ripped from DVD and converted to MPEG-4 files. Using the application QuickTime Pro®, I divided the six NFB videos into thematic chunks, which I then evaluated as potential editing blocks, and significantly shortened. Keeping in mind that many of the students would not have done any prior video editing, I strove to give the media some kind of structure that would help them understand the range of materials that were available. Given that the files had to be fairly small, I tried to establish a balance in the pre-editing process between producing small clips that could be processed quickly by the computer, and providing clips that had been so trimmed as to essentially reduce their role to that of sequencing (as opposed to actually editing.) To achieve this balance, I tried to include some “dross”, and multiple instances of the same action within one clip so that students still needed to engage in the process of editing by evaluating the contents of the clip and selecting only a portion of it.

### 2.9.6 Other media

There were a number of themes that students might conceivably wish to discuss that were not covered in any of the video clips, so still photographs were collected and added to the database. These were obtained through public archives such as Library and Archives Canada, Vancouver Public Archive, McGill War Archive and so on. As the vast majority of the video clips were silent, a CD

of war and battle sound effects was also purchased, and the tracks added to the database. Finally, permission was obtained to use a variety of vintage music tracks from the war era (http://www.firstworldwar.com) and a site offering rights-free music for educational productions was identified.

### 2.9.7 Organization and Presentation

The assembled media were organized on the basis of the range of topics they related to, such as battle, weaponry, casualties, or trenches. Each of these categories was further subdivided, for instance the battle theme divided into air battle, sea battle, and ground battle. Many clips were related to multiple themes and were thus cross-referenced.

### 2.9.8 Video format

Making the files cross-platform and usable with both Windows MovieMaker and iMovie® proved to be a bit of a challenge as there are few file formats compatible with both . An additional consideration entailed settling on compression specifications which allowed for the best video quality while still permitting all of the clips to be stored on CD-ROM. After considerable trial and error, all the video media was converted to MPEG-1 as it allowed the smallest sized files for the best compression based on the few file formats that both of these editing applications would import.

### 2.9.9 Hyperlinked interface

The next design challenge that emerged was how to present the material to the students. One alternative was to house the video clips in a series of

folders. Although simple to produce, this method would have required students to open and watch all the videos in order to know the range of materials available. Deciding this would require too much of the students' time and attention, I determined that an interface that would permit students to quickly get a feel for the materials that were available, without having to watch them all was called for. Under such a system, thumbnail images could accompany each clip, allowing the students to ignore ones that would clearly not match their needs.

I further decided that linking the media to a simple webpage that arranged them thematically in tables was the best way to present the materials to the students. This HTML document evolved over time to include a variety of links to informational sources, such as pages on Wikipedia discussing a certain battle or the use of a particular variety of weaponry, such as mortars[2].

## 2.10 Audio Recording

After the issue of how to get around the Deep Freeze software on the computers, the next most complex problem to solve was to find a way to record the student voiceovers for the documentaries they would make. The school had no video cameras or audio recorders available for this project, so between us, Mr. Gagnon and I purchased four small digital audio recorders. While the recording quality is not stellar, and the interface is less than intuitive, they were inexpensive and plugged easily into the USB ports on the workstations in the lab,

[2] The permission I received from the National Film Board to use the materials in my thesis does not permit me to make a copy of the CD-ROM in my thesis, but at the time of this writing, a version of the media kit is available online at http://www.sfu.ca/tracesofthepast.

allowing the files to be downloaded and stored on the network space available on each station.

# 3: METHOD

I have chosen to pursue this study in the mode of design-based research. Design experiments and other forms of design-based research (DBR) comprise what is being hailed as a new research paradigm in educational inquiry. That which sets design based research apart from other research paradigms is not precisely methodological; the various methods of data collection and analysis vary widely between one design study and another (Bell, 2004). Rather, what allows the body of DBR to cohere are its orientation to research and its broad objectives.

Accompanying increased interest in DBR have been concerns about what the method entails. Several proponents of this approach to research have attempted to address these concerns by establishing the key features that set DBR apart from more traditional experiments or observational studies (Barab & Squire, 2004; Cobb, Confrey, diSessa, Lehrer, & Schauble, 2003; Collins, 1999). What follows is a presentation of some of these distinctive features.

Firstly, DBR is interventionist in nature. That is, it concerns the design of lessons, units, or artefacts for teaching and learning. Most often, it involves the design of curricula that employ technological innovation in hopes of improving learning. However, DBR is not exclusively concerned with the production and refinement of designs themselves; albeit indirectly, it is also concerned with the production of new knowledge. Sandoval suggests that a fundamental aspect of

DBR is that it “embodies conjectures about learning within…the design of interventions, including designed technologies, curricular materials, and participation structures” (2004, p. 213).

Context is also a key element in DBR. As implied above, this approach to research takes place in naturalistic settings like classrooms and computer labs. Since these are messy and chaotic places, researchers must choose methods that are adaptive to these settings and surrender the desire to control and separate variables, as is done in experimental research.

The nature of theory is also a distinctive feature of DBR, as theory is both foundational to the design *and* a product of the inquiry. The nature of the theories either supporting or resulting from a DBB-oriented inquiry is wide-ranging. di Sessa and Cobb (2004) characterize such theories into four main categories: grand theories, orienting frameworks, frameworks for action, and domain specific instructional theories. This study is informed both by constructivist learning theories and by domain specific theory relating to the nature of, and best means to promote, historical understanding. The theory this study is intended to *generate*, relates to that which is revealed about students’ historical thinking as evidenced by the way they make historical documentaries.

Because the designs—whatever form they may take—that are central to DBR are subject to revision as the inquiry progresses, design studies tend to be iterative. A design experiment will typically involve multiple sites and sometimes more than one implementation at a particular site. Some design experiments span years and involve multiple sites and implementation cycles, creating a

wealth of data (Brown, 1992). Such a study is clearly beyond what is feasible for a master's research project. Bell (2004) suggests that it is "useful to consider design-based research as a high-level methodological orientation that can be employed within and across various theoretical perspectives and research traditions to bring design and research activities into a tight relation to advance our understanding of learning-related educational phenomena" (p. 245). This study fits under the broad mantle of design-based research, reporting on a single design cycle of an innovative unit in two classrooms. It is intended to be read as an initial examination of what I hope will be a continuing line of inquiry.

## 3.1 Research Questions

As it was proposed, the broad research question of this inquiry sought to explore the potential of video editing with archival materials as a means of supporting historical thinking among high school students. As the study progressed, the following more specific questions emerged:

1. What can the analysis of students' historical documentary videos reveal about their understanding of history?
2. What can an analysis of students' historical documentary videos reveal about the potential of the medium as a means of expressing students' understanding of history?
3. What changes to the Traces of the Past media kit might better support students in historical thinking?
4. What formative changes are warranted to the curricular design as a whole?

## 3.2 Data Collection

This study employed an array of different data collection instruments and processes including surveys, interviews, and documentary data.

### 3.2.1 Pre-survey

On the first day of the intervention, I administered a pre-survey to the participants in each of Mr. Gagnon's social studies 11 classes. This survey (see Appendix B) sought basic information about the students and their backgrounds.

### 3.2.2 Post-Survey

Several days after the intervention had wrapped up, I returned to the school to administer a second survey to all participants that was primarily designed to understand how the students felt about the project and the videos they had produced. It also sought to discover whether the participants felt they had learned from the project and what they hoped their viewer might take away from watching the video (see Appendix C).

### 3.2.3 Interviews

#### Teacher

Several weeks after the intervention had wrapped up, I conducted a forty-minute interview with Mr. Gagnon in order to probe his thoughts and feelings about the implementation of the design, the degree to which he felt the students had engaged in historical thinking, and what he might like to change about the design (see Appendix D for the interview guide). This interview was videotaped and transcribed.

**Students**

Lasting between twenty and thirty minutes each, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the producers of ten of the videos. In the instances where a pair of students had produced a video, they were interviewed as a dyad.

Student interviewing spanned three weeks. Appointments were booked in three different time windows—before classes in the mornings, in the latter half of the lunch hour, and immediately after school. On eight occasions, interview appointments were missed by students. In two cases, after the students had missed the third scheduled interview appointment, I opted not to reschedule a fourth time and instead approached another participant.

Sampling of participants to interview was based on the grades students had received for the videos, as assigned by Mr. Gagnon. The students interviewed represented as stratified a sample as was possible, for in addition to those students who continually missed their appointments and were replaced, one or both of the producers of three videos—all of whom received grades at the lower end of the scale—declined to be interviewed. Thus, the resulting interviews were somewhat skewed towards the higher end of the grade scale.

An interview protocol or guide (see Appendix E) was followed in each of the interviews. Part of that guide was standardized, but an additional section dealt with specific issues arising out of the individual videos. A cursory analysis of all the student videos had taken place prior to the interviews and thus part of the interview guide specifically addressed aspects of each video that was of

interest to me. For example, if the students had included some unusual imagery or had opted not to address a specific aspect of the history of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, I asked them about these topics. All student interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

### 3.2.4 Student Videos

The final documentary videos produced by the participants comprise one of the most important pieces of data for this study. Copies of the exported student videos were collected as Windows Media Video® (wmv) files after they were submitted to a special folder on the school's network. I later converted the videos to QuickTime® movie files in order to make them more accessible.

### 3.2.5 Grades

I obtained permission to get three sets of grades for each participant—their final grade on the video (see Appendix A for the grading criteria), their mark for the whole term, and their grade on one other project or event. For that latter optional project or event, I selected the students' grades on a midterm exam the students wrote shortly after the video project wrapped up. The topic of this exam dealt with events in Canadian history in the decade spanning 1911 to 1920. The grades collected were used primarily for the purpose of sampling.

### 3.2.6 Other Data Sources

There are two additional data sources that I had proposed to collect—field notes and the students' plans or scripts for their videos. For the reasons I detail below, both of these data sources were excluded from the analysis.

#### 3.2.6.1 Field Observations

Due to the highly complex nature of working with video, I had anticipated that the intervention would generate a great many technical questions and problems that would require the attention of someone other than Mr. Gagnon to address. In order that I might be free to take observational field notes during each of the sessions in the computer lab, I asked a former colleague and video production expert to attend the sessions in order to address the technical questions that might arise as the project progressed.

Having Miss Devoy present allowed me to take notes on the first two days in the lab. However, a number of problems emerged on the third day of the intervention making it necessary for me to largely abandon collecting observational data during the class blocks in order that I might assist in the implementation of the design. For the remainder of the implementation, I was only able to take notes following the classes. However as I was in and out of the lab so much, managing the student recordings and then at the teacher's computer workstation working to distribute the audio files, I was able to observe little of what was actually going on in the lab. The data that resulted was not robust enough to warrant analysis and was primarily used as an "aide memoire" for the implementation section.

#### 3.2.6.2 Video Scripts

The other data source I had proposed to collect, but was unable to do so, were the scripts students wrote and handed in that detailed the plans for their videos. It had been my plan to make copies of these scripts after Mr. Gagnon

had marked them up with feedback and notations in order that I might compare their initial plans to the realized version as embodied in the final videos. As was noted in the implementation section of the previous chapter, the submission of scripts was a disorderly process. In the chaos, those scripts that had been submitted on time were returned to students before copies had been made. As students needed the scripts in order to complete their recordings and import their video clips, it was not feasible to ask for them back in order to make copies while the projects were in progress. Mr. Gagnon often read the late submissions in class and handed them immediately back to the students so they could either get on with their revisions or proceed to the next stage of the process.

After the intervention had wrapped up, Mr. Gagnon asked participating students to return their scripts back to him so that he could pass them on to me. However, so few students did so (seven) that I opted to eliminate the scripts altogether as a data source.

## 3.3 Data Analysis

The primary research question of this inquiry involves the capacity of the design to support historical thinking in grade eleven social studies students. Largely, this is an outcome-based question. Thus, of all the data collected, the final product of the design—the student videos—received the most attention in my analysis.

Van Leewen and Jewitt make an important distinction between two different kinds of visual data—image as record versus image as construct (2001).

This distinction is particularly relevant to this study. Videotaped class sessions are an instance of image as record. Image as construct, on the other hand, involves visual data that are constructions or products of the intervention or design as opposed to the inquiry examining that intervention. The videos produced by the students in this study are of this latter variety. To do justice to these data, I chose to take an interdisciplinary approach, importing methods from Media and Cultural Studies.

### 3.3.1 Multilevel Analyses

Documentary film theorist Bill Nichols describes the type of documentary that the students produced as having employed an expository mode of representation (1991). Expository documentaries follow a style that addresses the viewer directly, using voices (or in some cases titles), which seek to advance an argument about the historical world. Nichols provides the following description of this variety of documentary:

> Expository texts take shape around commentary directed toward the viewer; images serve as illustration or counterpoint. Non-synchronous sound prevails (expository representation prevailed before location sound recording in sync became reasonably manageable around 1960). The rhetoric of the commentator's argument serves as the textual dominant, moving the text forward in service of its persuasive needs (1991, pp. 35-36).

While any cinematic text is more than the sum of its parts and thus must be watched and interpreted as a synergistic whole, much of the intricacy of an audiovisual text can be lost when playing back at thirty frames per second in a

medium comprised of a number of different communicative elements. The visual and aural planes in an expository documentary are non-synchronous, and accordingly, are connected only by virtue of the contiguity that occurs through the process of constructing or editing the sequence. Thus, while the visual and aural planes work in concert in the final audiovisual text, they are nonetheless separable for the purposes of analysis. Yet the very nature of the medium connects the visual and aural modes through their simultaneous playback.

Realizing that there was much to be learned about the student videos both by breaking them down into their essential elements and by analyzing them in a more holistic fashion, my analysis of the student videos was two pronged. The first level of examination was atomistic; through a series of content analyses, it sought to characterize the broad range of work produced by the participants. A second level of analysis sought a more holistic approach by looking at the overall structure of a subset of the videos. This second level of analysis paid close attention to the nature of the relationship between the modalities in the video as a whole, in order to determine what might be learned about video production as a means of expression of students' understanding of history.

### 3.3.2 Content Analysis

A staple method in media research, content analysis (Bell, 2001; Berger, 2005; Rose, 2007) allows for a systematic analysis of a body of texts and is helpful in exploring and making generalizations about those texts.

In order to characterize the range of the materials students used in the construction of their videos, it was first necessary to decompose the videos into their component parts. In dealing with an audiovisual text, in addition to isolating the visual from the verbal, it is possible to narrow one's focus even further to the various communicative elements available to be woven together within each mode through the craft of editing. Film semiotician Christian Metz, in his landmark *Language and Cinema,* suggests that cinematic texts are composed from five communicative strands. "…the visual image, the musical sound, the verbal sounds of speech, sound effects, and the graphic form of credits" (Metz, 1974a, p. 16). With a slight adaptation, this Metzian typology was used as a framework for the content analyses.

The digital wave had not hit the world of film and television at the time Metz was writing; visual effects were not nearly as common in the 1970s. Highly complex and tremendously expensive, visual effects were then used sparingly. Today, however, even simple applications that come bundled with operating systems (i.e. iMovie and MovieMaker) come with an array of different visual effects that may be added to the playback sequence with the simple click of a button. Thus, I made a slight alteration to Metz's framework to add visual effects as a category of analysis.

#### 3.3.2.1 Aural Content

The sonic portion of the student videos is composed of three main elements: voiceover recordings, music, and sound effects. A copy of the final, edited audio track was extracted from each of the videos and then transcribed.

During the transcription process, changes in speaker were noted, as were any disruptions in sound track and the occurrence of any sound effects or music.

**Analysis of voiceover/narration content**

The spoken word is very prominent in all types of documentary film. Nichols suggests, “Although we may well be able to infer the story of many fiction films by watching the succession of images alone (watching a movie on an airplane without headphones will bear this out), we would be hard pressed to infer the argument of a documentary without access to the sound track” (1991, p. 21). Given the prominence of the spoken word—with its role as the backbone of the student documentaries—it was logical to begin the analysis of the videos by addressing the contents of their voice tracks.

In the assignment, students were given two tasks—firstly to tell the story of the battle, and secondly to explain its significance. Yet there are few clean lines that can be drawn in the student voice tracks between that which is purely historical narrative and that which is strictly an argument for significance. The latter is often dealt with in separate statements in addition to being interwoven throughout the narrative. That which the students chose to include in their historical narratives is largely what they consider to be salient about the battle, and indicates the interpretive frame with which they viewed the battle. This sheds considerable light on how they understood the battle to be historically significant.

In order to represent what the students found salient to mention in their historical accounts, a study was made of the source materials students had

available as well as a number of popular and academic historical accounts of the battle (Hayes, Bechthold, & Iarocci, 2007; Inglis, 1995; Morton & Granatstein, 1989). From these materials, a matrix was constructed that reflects the various appeals that have and can be made as to the significance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. A framework drawn from the literature (Philips, 2002) was then used to organize the literature-based categories into clusters built around the nature of the various arguments and whether they related to military significance, political or national significance, social significance, or economic significance (see Appendix F for the coding sheet that was used). Transcriptions of each of the student voice tracks were then coded according to this matrix with small adjustments made to the overall scheme to accommodate the additional events or trends to which students had drawn connections—such as the Spanish Flu epidemic—that did not appear in the literature. The results of this analysis are presented in Chapter 5.

**Analysis of music and sound effects**

Whether students chose to include additional sound elements, and the nature of such elements, are revealing. For example, choosing to end a documentary about the First World War with a modern rock anthem might suggest that creating atmosphere and conveying emotion were more important to the movie's producers than establishing a sense of the historic period. That students chose to include a particular battle sound effect, such an explosion or the report of a gun, might suggest a desire to increase the intensity or realism of a particular sequence.

In order to be able to characterize how widespread the use of music and sound effects were in the films and the nature of those sonic elements, notations were made regarding each piece of music or sound effect. Sound effects were identified by a description of their content—such as explosions or machine gun fire. Musical selections were identified by title and artist when possible, and by a description of genre, instruments, and mood when I was unable to determine the exact piece. The notations then detailed whether the sound element in question came from the media kit, or was obtained by the students. Also noted was the apparent attention and care taken when adding these sound elements to the video playback sequence. For example, sometimes a sound effect or piece of music was added on top of the narrative without the levels being adjusted to accommodate the presence of two tracks of audio. As a result, the contents of the voiceover were lost. Such errors suggest that the students either did not playback their whole video before submitting it (the filmic equivalent of proof reading) or that they found the music or sound effects of greater importance than the voiceover/narration. These findings are presented in Chapter 6.

#### 3.3.2.2 Visual Content

The “shot” is generally considered to be the basic structural element in cinema (Stam, Burgoyne, & Flitterman-Lewis, 1992). The completed student videos were imported into the professional level video editing application Avid Xpress® Pro. A function of this application was then used to place cut marks at the transition points between each of the original shots making up the visual track. These cut marks were then used to determine the number of shots in each

of the videos and as well as the longest, shortest, and average shot lengths. In the craft of editing, shot lengths are considered to be a handy measure of the pacing[3] of the overall program.

A further study was made of the visual events—image, effects, and titles that comprised the various shots. Once again, a function of the Avid software was used to aid in the process. On the playback timeline, each visual event in the student documentary was tagged with a locator. The software allows text to be added to these locators; as a result, the coding information was added to each of the locator tags. Finally, I generated a printout for each video that listed the temporal location for each locator within the overall program. Along with a thumbnail image of each visual frame that had been tagged, the printouts also contained all the categorization information that had been added to each. (See Appendix G for an example of one of the coded printouts.)

In the content analysis of the visual materials, events of the following four types were identified: still image, video clip, title, and effect. When applicable, it was noted whether the visual element had been provided in the Traces of the Past media kit or if it was student-obtained. Those which had been provided were then further identified by their name within the media kit and well as their description. The number and length of shot, as well as the occurrence of each of the different types of visual events, were tallied at the bottom of the printouts.

[3] Pacing is a measure of the overall rhythm of shots and has much to do with the length of shots in a sequence. It is something that can be used for dramatic effect. For example, a sequence wherein shots gradually become shorter can create a sense of tension and excitement.

### 3.3.3 Correlational Statistical Analysis

After the previous analysis were completed, I compiled all the data using a spreadsheet in order to generate percentages and so forth. In this tabular format, as I sorted the videos according to the grades they had been assigned by Mr. Gagnon, I noticed what appeared to be a correlation between the grade a video received and the proportion of student obtained images within it. In order to substantiate this observation, the content analysis results and grades were imported into the statistical analysis application SPSS.

### 3.3.4 Further Analysis of Student Obtained Materials

Finding a significant correlation between the grades received and the number of student obtained images utilized prompted a deeper analysis into the nature of the images the students had procured for themselves outside of the media kits. I then went back to the videos themselves and compiled a list for each of all of the student obtained images. Denzin (1989a) would consider this a form of visual transcription. The lists of images were then coded using very simple emergent categories such as “poppies”, “flags”, or “crosses”. In most cases, no complex interpretive work was necessary as the contents of the images were quite clear. For the more obscure images, I simply described the contents to the best of my ability. The purpose of this analysis was to characterize the nature of the student obtained images, in the hopes of determining any discernible trends and to establish what the students’ image choices might tell us about their understanding of historical documentary, Vimy Ridge, and the assignment itself. These findings are presented in Chapter 6.

### 3.3.5 In Depth Video Analyses

A question that had emerged early on in the research related to the degree to which students would be able to use the medium to communicate, and how conversant they would be with the codes and conventions of visual storytelling. While the content analyses undertaken on the individual visual and aural elements of the student videos allowed for a characterization of the compositional range of the videos, they did not permit an examination of the texts as a whole, or in a way that permitted one to make observations about how the students had used the various communicative strands in order to construct and transmit meaning.

Bell suggests that content analysis "might best be thought of as a necessary but not sufficient methodology for answering questions about what the media depicts or represents. Content analysis alone is seldom able to support statements about the significance, effects or interpreted meaning of a domain of representation" (2001, p. 13). Stokes takes this argument a step further by asserting:

> It is particularly fruitful to combine semiotic analysis with content analysis. You could use content analysis to determine how many of a certain kind of image exist in a given set of texts and then use semiotics to analyse a smaller section in more detail. This combination would give you some breadth (looking at a range of images) and depth (analyzing a small sample closely) (2003, p. 75).

In Film and Media Studies, as in Education, there are a number of different ways to approach textual analysis. From among the available methods,

I chose to employ a social semiotic analysis (Iedema, 2001). Social semiotics goes beyond the study of the signs and sign systems of formal semiotics to examine how people use signs to construct meaning. As one of my questions pertains to what might be learned about students' understanding of history from the way they make films, this method seemed particularly well suited to addressing this question. A social semiotic analysis of a small sample of the films afforded the ability to pay particular attention to how the students constructed their documentaries including the overall structure of the videos and how the various structural elements fit together.

#### 3.3.5.1 Sampling

Stokes suggests that one method of making semiotic analysis stronger, and increasing the reliability of the results, is to combine the interpretation with interview data (2003). Believing this would strengthen some of my observations, I chose the subset of videos for this analysis from among those whose producers I had interviewed. Given the unintentional skew in the interview sampling towards grades at the higher end of the scale (mentioned earlier), all three of the videos selected for semiotic analysis were from the upper half of the grade spectrum.

Selection was made from among the videos in the interview subset using a stratified sampling method. Stratification was based on grades and the overall proportion of student obtained materials. In the case of the third video selected, several videos were candidates for analysis, however, as both the other sampled

videos had been produced by female students, gender balance also played a role in my selection. The three in depth analyses are presented in Chapter 7.

## 3.4 Trustworthiness

Traditional experimental research reports are often not seen as complete unless they address issues of internal and external validity as well as questions of reliability and objectivity. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) have cogently argued, these measures are a product of the positivistic epistemology that surrounds experimental research and are inconsistent with research methods of a qualitative nature which often take a more interpretive epistemological stance. Rather than measures of validity, objectivity, and so forth, Lincoln and Guba propose four criteria as measures of *trustworthiness* in naturalistic inquiry—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (1985). Below I will outline the measures suggested by these authors that were undertaken during the completion of this study in order to lend credence to the results.

### 3.4.1 Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) there are various activities in which researchers might engage in order that they might strengthen the *credibility* of their findings. The ultimate goal of this criterion is to produce results that are plausible (Guba, 1981).

#### 3.4.1.1 Prolonged Engagement

It is suggested that in naturalistic studies, enough time must be spent in the field in order to build trust and learn about the culture of the individuals

central to the inquiry. In this study, both before and after the implementation took place, I spent time in Mr. Gagnon's classes so that the students might grow accustomed to my presence, and I could establish trust with the participants. Another reason for my extended observations was so that I might observe the interactions between Mr. Gagnon and his students as they went about their usual classroom activities outside of the computer lab.

#### 3.4.1.2 Triangulation

Triangulation—one of the more commonly used means of improving the likelihood that findings and interpretations will be deemed credible—is typically seen to be of one of four different varieties: data, investigator, theory, and methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1989b). This study employed two of these four styles of triangulation. The first of the types of triangulation employed in this study is that of data triangulation, which refers to the use of different data sources. As has been discussed above, this inquiry involves a number of different data sources each of which was mined for anything they might reveal regarding the four research questions articulated at the beginning of this chapter. Methodological triangulation was also employed in this study. As was previously explained, the primary data source, the student videos, were analyzed using two complementary methods of analysis each of which was designed to address certain weaknesses in the other method.

#### 3.4.1.3 Member Checking

Lincoln and Guba suggest that, “The member check, whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (1985, p. 314). During my interviews with the participants, I ended the discussion of a particular segment of the interview by summarizing what I had gleaned from what the participants had told me. I did this so that I might present my interpretation of what had been said back to the participants which then provided them the opportunity to disagree or to challenge my conclusions and interpretations. In reporting my findings, I included such member checking statements in the interview excerpts so that the reader may know the participants’ reactions to any conclusions I put forth.

### 3.4.2 Transferability

As Guba (1981) suggests, “Naturalists eschew generalizations on the grounds that virtually all social/behavioral phenomena are context-bound” (p. 86). As opposed to the establishment of external validity leading to generalizability, Lincoln and Guba propose transferability as an alternative that is in keeping with the tenets of naturalistic inquiry. Instead of producing generalized results, this study seeks to provide context-relevant statements that are sufficiently descriptive thus allowing the reader make judgements with respect to similarity in other contexts. This was achieved firstly through the use of purposive sampling (as described above) and also through the collection and reporting of ‘thickly’ descriptive data that permit such comparisons to be made.

### 3.4.3 Transparency

In addition to the measures suggested by Lincoln and Guba, Anfara and Brown (2002) suggest that providing access to the decisions that are made and the protocols used further supports the credibility of findings. To this end, I have tried to be as transparent as possible with regard to the decisions I made during the collection and analysis of the data as well as by providing copies of all relevant protocols and matrices in the form of appendices. Additionally, when reporting results, I have tried to provide sufficient data as to allow readers the opportunity to examine the data for themselves in order that they may draw their own interpretations.

# 4: RESEARCH CONTEXT AND IMPLEMENTATION

## 4.1 Site

The enactment of the design and all of the data collection took place in a school that herein is being called Oceanview Secondary[4]. It is a large, urban school in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia with a student population of approximately 1800 students. While only fourteen percent of the student body is enrolled in ESL training, 83% of the students attending Oceanview report a language other than English as the main language spoken in their home. Across the student body, the top three languages reported to be spoken in the home were Chinese, Cantonese, and Punjabi (BC, 2008).

According to census data employed by the BC Ministry of Education, the school is situated in a mid to low income area with 34% of the surrounding population having a family income lower than $30,000—a figure which is lower than both the district and provincial averages. Sixty-five percent of the adults living in the area have at least a high school diploma; this is also lower than both district and provincial averages (ibid.)

## 4.2 Participants

The participants in the study were volunteers from two of Mr. Gagnon's social studies 11 classes—one an enriched class, the other mainstream. Fifty-

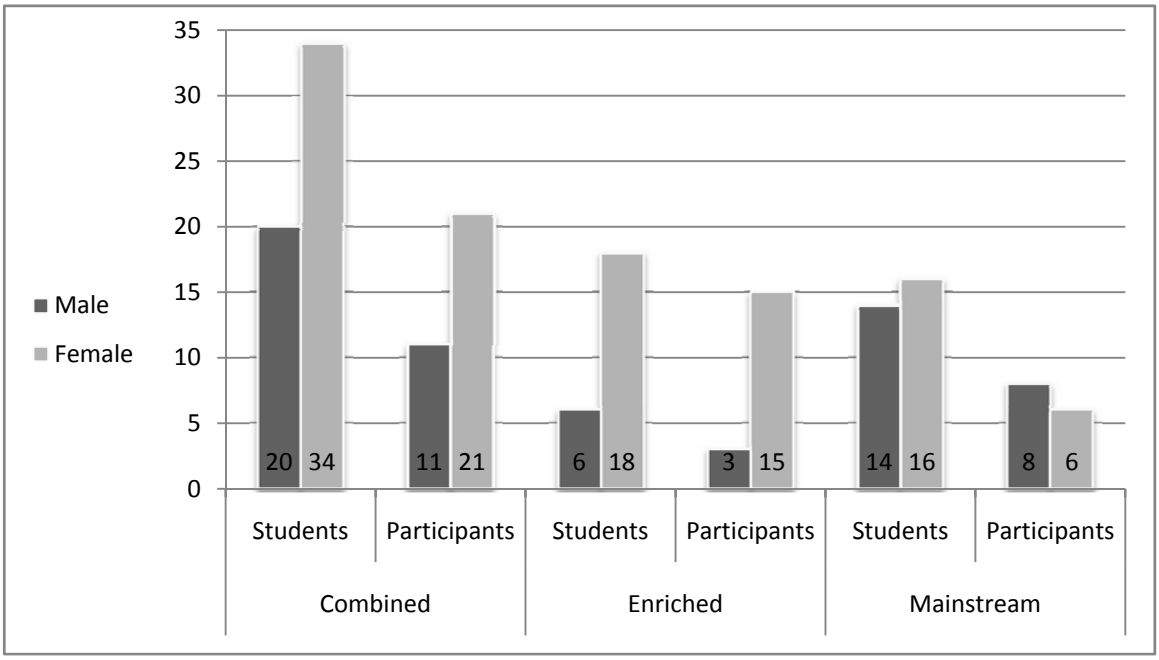
[4] Pseudonyms are used throughout this thesis to ensure participant anonymity.

nine percent of the students in these two classes opted to participate in the study. Interest in the study was clearly greater in the enriched class where seventy-five percent of the students volunteered to participate, as opposed to the forty-seven percent in the mainstream class.

### 4.2.1 Gender

The ratio of females to males in the study was roughly 2:1. This is commensurate with the overall female to male ratio across the two classes, with 63 percent of students in the two classes being female and 66 percent of participants being female. Figure 4-1 shows the overall gender breakdowns.

**Figure 4-1 - Students vs. Participants in the two class blocks**



### 4.2.2 English as a Second Language

BC Ministry of Education reports on the school asked students to report on the dominant use of another language in the home. This study asked students whether or not English was their first language. Overall, 62 percent of the participants reported being ESL. Additionally, the breakdowns by class as shown in table 4-1 indicate a higher incidence in the mainstream class.

**Table 4-1 - Incidence of ESL by Block**

| Class | ESL |
|---|---|
| Mainstream | 71% |
| Enriched | 56% |
| Total | 62% |

### 4.2.3 Plans after High School

Of those graduating in the 2004/05 school year, eighty percent of the graduating population from Oceanview Secondary as a whole enrolled in a public post secondary institution in the following year. This figure is significantly higher than both the district average of 67% and the provincial average of 51%. In an open-ended question on the pre-survey, the participants were asked about their plans after finishing high school; combining both groups, 59% of the participants either explicitly said they would take postsecondary education or they listed a career, such as dentistry, which would require some kind of postsecondary training.

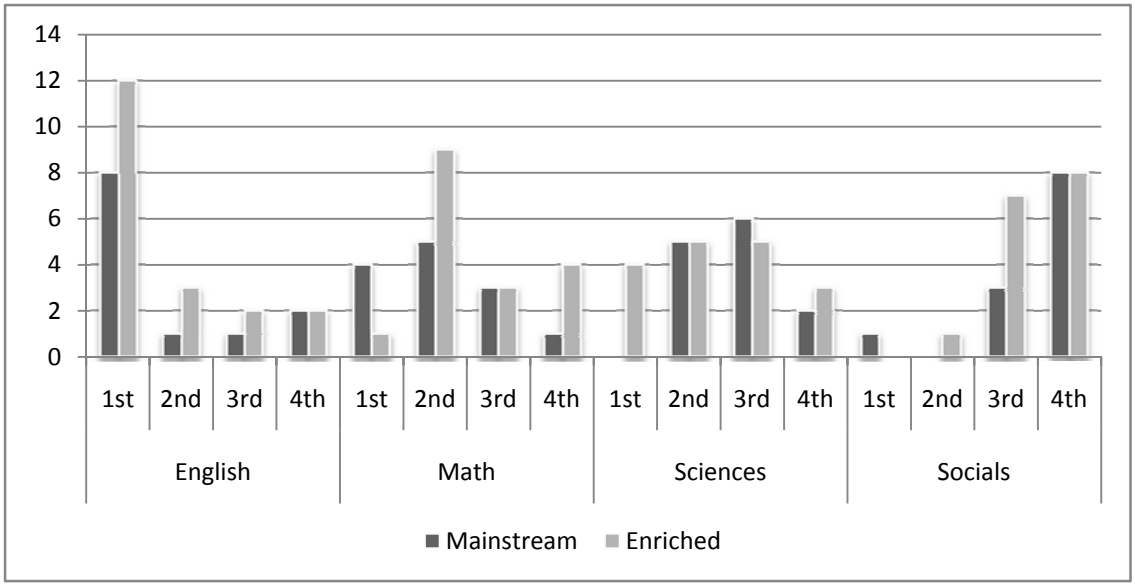
**Table 4-2 - Participant Plans for after High School**

| Plans | Mainstream | Enriched |
|---|---|---|
| Post secondary | 39% | 75% |
| Not sure | 46% | 25% |
| Other | 15% | 0% |

### 4.2.4 Participants' Feelings towards Social Studies

A Statistics Canada survey (2004) found that secondary students selecting either social studies or history as their favourite school subject were a small minority. A question on my pre-survey asked: Using the numbers 1 through 4, please rank the following core subjects in the order that you feel they are most to least important for students to learn in school (most important = 1, least important = 4). The results are displayed below in Figure 4-2. Clearly, the participants situated social studies at the lower end of the importance scale.

**Figure 4-2 - Disciplinary Rankings by Participants**




Other open-ended questions asked students to write what they felt were the best and worst things about social studies. They are quite revealing—especially in regard to what the participants do *not* like about social studies. Two responses that came up time and again; thirteen of those who responded wrote

that remembering dates or facts was the worst thing about social studies, while another six felt that the worst thing was that it can be boring.

## 4.3 Implementation

Oceanview does not operate on a semester system but alternates courses on a two-day schedule of blocks. Mr. Gagnon's mainstream and enriched social studies classes both took place on day two of the schedule—the mainstream class in the first block of the day and the enriched class in the second block, right after recess.

As I suggested in Chapter 2, the approach taken by Mr. Gagnon and I throughout has most closely resembled a deliberative curriculum development approach. Reid, one of the proponents of this conception of curriculum suggests:

> Within a deliberative perspective, curriculum is seen not as plan, cultural reproduction, or personal experience (though it contains elements of all of these), but as a practical art: the art of discovering curriculum problems, deliberating about them, and inventing solutions to them (2006, p. 16).

Taking this perspective on the curricular implementation that was undertaken in this study, I have chosen to present the enactment of the design in the form of a narrative that details day by day, what the plan had been and what happened as the plan was realized.

As previously mentioned, my field notes were not instructive in answering any of my research questions, but they proved useful in compiling this account of the implementation. In carrying out the implementation, Mr. Gagnon and I were joined in the computer lab by a friend and former colleague of mine. Miss Devoy

agreed to attend all of the sessions in the computer lab to help address technical questions that arose.

### 4.3.1 Day One

The first day in the computer lab was a Wednesday. On the Monday, Mr. Gagnon had given students an introduction to the project and had handed out an information sheet. Students were slow filing into the computer lab that morning, as many of them forgot and went to the classroom only to see a note on the door reminding them that class was in the lab.

Both blocks flowed pretty much the same. After attendance, Mr. Gagnon had the students pull out the handout that he had distributed at the end of the previous class (see Appendix A). The students' attention was directed to the explanation of the assignment and the grading rubric. The students were asked to watch an example video about the failed Dieppe Raid that had been created by students in the design pilot (discussed previously). Once the video had finished playing on the overhead screen, Mr. Gagnon handed out CD-ROMs containing the media kits and suggested that students spend twenty minutes to half an hour exploring the site and playing video clips to get a feel for what materials were available. The students also received the pre-survey at this point and were asked to fill it in. Many students put the survey to the side and got straight to inserting the CD-ROMs.

There was a significant degree of chaos at this point. The computers in the lab had been left in a variety of different states—some were powered down,

others had simply been logged off. Many of the students logged on without problem, but Miss Devoy had to help seven students either to locate the login information for their station or to find the power button to turn the computer on.

In a previous test of the CD-ROM materials, some students had found it difficult to open the disc with the operating system. Still others had missed the instructions regarding which file to open, and had ended up randomly clicking through folders in the support files instead of using the html interface and the organizational structure it provided. As both of these situations had led to student frustration and lost time, the second generation of discs that were used in this study had an *autorun* applet that automatically opened the html index page whenever the disc was mounted by the operating system.

After twenty-five minutes playing around with the materials, Mr. Gagnon suggested that students begin working on writing their accounts of the battle of Vimy Ridge, and handed out an example script to let them see what it might look like (see Appendix H). Their attention was also drawn to certain pages within the Traces of the Past media kit which contained hyperlinks to specific pages on Wikipedia.

Students worked noisily either on their own or with a partner to do some research on the battle. Many continued to play with the materials on the disc. Many discovered the music files and took great joy in playing them back at full volume. This contributed to the ongoing atmosphere of chaos. At the end of the class, students were told that there was a version of the media kit available on

line and the URL was written on the whiteboard. Students were also informed that they could sign one of the discs out to take home if that was easier for them.

### 4.3.2 Day Two

In order to save time, Miss Devoy and I powered up and logged on all the computers so that when students came in they could get started right away. We also created a folder on the network space for each computer station so that students would have a place to store any files they worked on, without losing their work when the computer was restarted. At the beginning of both class blocks, Mr. Gagnon reminded students not to save anything to the desktop and wrote the location of the directory they were to use on the whiteboard. He also informed both groups of students that he was ready to read and give feedback on anything students cared to show him, and that scripts would be due by noon on Wednesday of the following week. He noted this was not a day when the students' had class with him, but suggested scripts could be left in his mailbox or delivered to the classroom. Monday, they were informed, class would be held back in the classroom. It was brought to their attention that this was the last class block they would have to research and write their scripts. At that point, media discs were handed out and students were left mostly to their own devices for the remainder of the block.

Mr. Gagnon and Miss Devoy circulated, answering questions and making sure students were not on a completely unrelated webpage checking sports scores or reading email. Mr. Gagnon sometimes asked to see what students had done so far on their scripts. At the end of the class, students were reminded of

the URL to access the website on line and then given the option to sign out a disc. Between the two blocks, seventeen of the fifty-two opted to take a disc home to work on over the weekend.

### 4.3.3 Day Three

It had been the original plan that the scripts would be handed back with Mr. Gagnon's feedback and that the day would be spent making final revisions for those who required it while those who had addressed both portions of the question would be given permission to move on to starting a video project in Windows Movie Maker and recording their voiceovers. As it turned out, many of the groups had not submitted a script to Mr. Gagnon on Wednesday as they had been asked to do. Of those who had, many needed serious revision—as they had either not addressed the second portion of the assignment (which required an assessment of the significance of the battle), or they had done so in an insubstantial fashion. Mr. Gagnon wanted to give them an opportunity to address that before they began realizing their scripts.

Mr. Gagnon spent much of the day reading and giving feedback on scripts as they straggled in. By the end of the day, three quarters of the students from the two blocks had been given permission to begin the editing process, but only three video projects (two from the enriched class and one from the mainstream) had finished the audio recording and were ready to begin work on Windows MovieMaker.

A number of conferences took place between Mr. Gagnon, Miss Devoy, and myself on this day of the implementation, as we deliberated about how we might get things back on track after our plans had been derailed by so few of the students being ready to edit. The following points are those which our discussions centred on.

#### 4.3.3.1 *Editing Demo*

One of our concerns related to plans we had made regarding Miss Devoy giving a demo of the software using the teacher station and the projector. As so few students were actually ready to begin the editing stage of the project, we were concerned that teaching them to use the software would be a distraction at that point. The question that remained was whether or not to push the demo to the following day in the lab or to try to work without it, especially in light of the students all being at varying stages in the overall process. In the end, we noted that the few students who were ready to begin the editing process had opened the software on their own and had made good progress with but a few pointers. We therefore decided to simply provide a handout that explained the overall process they should follow. We also resolved that Miss Devoy would monitor their progress, offering help with the software if and when students needed it. If that went fairly well, we would follow that plan with the rest of the students as they completed their scripts and moved on to that stage over the following days.

#### 4.3.3.2 Audio Recording Process

Organizing and managing the student audio recordings was one of the most demanding aspects of the whole intervention. We suspected ahead of time that it was going to be challenging, but we were unable to anticipate the problems that would come up until we encountered them. It became clear near the end of the first block with the mainstream class that we needed to streamline the recording process, or there simply would not be enough time for everyone to finish their recordings. It was concluded that we needed to be able to do more audio recordings at the same time, and further that students needed to take a lot less time to complete their recordings. However, we also noted that even if we succeeded in making the recording process more efficient, we might also need to provide access to the recorders outside of class so that students had the opportunity to record on their own time before the next block.

**Time**

The three recordings that had been completed that day had each taken between 25 and 35 minutes. Considering that most of the scripts timed out at about 3-5 minutes, we felt that this amount of time was unreasonably long, and looked for contributing factors. When working in pairs, the students had often not worked out ahead of time who was going to be reading which section of the prepared script. Additionally, many had not taken the time to practice reading their scripts aloud. As a result, they often ended up recording their voiceover seven or eight times due to silly pronunciation mistakes and nervous giggles.

#### Simultaneity

Despite the fact that we had three digital recorders available, only one was in use at any one time. This was partly due to the complex interface of the digital recorders (which demanded explanation), and partly to the fact that we only had access to one quiet location in which to record—Mr. Gagnon's classroom.

#### Extra Day

Mr. Gagnon informed Miss Devoy and I that he had booked an extra day in the computer lab, just in case it was needed. We decided at that point that it would indeed be necessary in order for everyone to get finished. We decided to let students know they had an extra day only on day five in the lab, as the pressure of the impending deadline was keeping students on task.

## 4.4 Day Four

In the mainstream class, there were five students—two dyads and an individual—who had still not submitted a script, so Mr. Gagnon pulled these students out of the lab and took them to a room across the hall to finish their scripts. Miss Devoy and I had devised a number of strategies that were intended to ensure that as many students got their recordings done that day as possible.

#### 4.4.1.1 Streamlined Audio Recording Process

The script recording process ran much more smoothly. It still required a lot of management, but we completed more recordings.

**Handout**

In order that the students might use the recorders on their own, I developed a handout with photographs depicting the various buttons and elements of the interface. In very simple terms, this handout showed how to turn on the device and get it to record. It also explained how to avoid unwanted background noise and schooled students in how to make note of their recording numbers so that they knew which of the scores of audio files on the device were those belonging to their project.

**Additional Location**

I had determined there was a quiet meeting room in the library, which was quite close to the computer lab, and had arranged with the librarian to book it for the blocks we were in the lab on both the fourth and fifth days of the implementation, to use if for recording.

**Preparation and Planning**

Before we gave the students a recorder and escorted them to one of the two recording spaces, students were asked to go across the hall to the cafeteria and read their script aloud once or twice to ensure they were comfortable with it.

We now had two recorders in active use and swapped one out with the spare every now and then so that we could download the audio recordings onto my laptop and still have two groups recording at all times. Each recorder was numbered and had a sheet with it on which groups were asked to keep track of their takes and the corresponding recording numbers, along with notes regarding which recordings were “good”. I copied all the completed files from each recorder

into a folder on my computer and used a couple of memory sticks or email to distribute the audio files to the students to whom they belonged.

By the end of the block, more than half the groups had finished their audio recordings and all but a few had created a project using Windows MovieMaker and had imported the video clips, stills, and audio files with which they intended to edit. Mr. Gagnon suggested to those groups who had not done their recordings to make arrangements with him to borrow a recorder either at lunch, before school, or after school to do the recording on their own time.

By the end of the day, I had amassed scores of student audio files on my laptop. Some of them were identified as belonging to a group, but many were not. Additionally, some groups had only taken a portion of the audio files they had created, but determined later that they needed a different take of their voiceover. In order to make the audio files more readily available to students, I uploaded all of them to the webpage using the first 10 words of the audio to identify them.

## 4.5 Day Five

Our time in the computer lab on the fifth day was beset by technical issues. In most video editing applications, the clip files that appear in the project space are pointer files which are linked to specific media files, allowing for playback of the original video or audio files on the CD-ROM. In tests in the lab, this process had worked without issue, and some groups had no trouble whatsoever. However, on some of the computer stations, when Windows

MovieMaker was re-opened, the clip files appeared in the interface with a large red X through them indicating that the link between the clips and the media files had been severed. Typically this took a few minutes to fix, as students had to right-click on each of the problem clips and manually re-establish a link to the original media files. Sometimes establishing a link to one file allowed the application to re-establish links with a whole body of files, other times the student had to manually locate every one of the files they had imported. In a few cases, the application refused to re-establish the links. Those students were forced to re-import their files.

Additionally, several groups had lost their project files entirely having saved them to the local machine rather than on the network. These had been eradicated by Deep Freeze. To ease the stress the students were feeling, Mr Gagnon announced that students had an additional class day in the lab that Wednesday, and that projects were not due until the following Tuesday in class.

By the end of the day, every group or individual had recorded their audio and had created a project and begun editing. A couple of groups were finished at the end of that block, but the majority still had a lot of work to do.

## 4.6 Day Six

Mr. Gagnon began the day by talking to both classes about titles and effects. After suggesting that titles and effects could make their projects look more professional, Mr. Gagnon cautioned students against using too many effects, and ones that were too flashy and did not help them tell the story.

That final class in the lab also saw a lot of technical issues, but having done it the day before, many of the students knew how to re-establish the links between the original media files and the clips within the project and so helped their neighbours. A couple of projects in the mainstream block were corrupt and refused to re-open at all. Miss Devoy and I devoted our time to helping these students recover the ground that was lost due to this setback and then circulated showing students how to adjust audio levels, and add titles. The questions we received were all of a technical nature.

## 4.7 Extra Time in the Lab

Despite the extra day that was added on to the intervention, many of the students still required more time. The computer lab at Oceanview is not open to students either at lunchtime or after school unless a teacher is present. Realizing that many students did not have access to a computer at home, Mr. Gagnon made arrangements to open the computer lab for students to do some extra work. Day six in the lab had been on a Wednesday. On the Thursday, Mr. Gagnon arranged to open the lab for 45 minutes before the start of classes and during the lunch hour. Since it was a short day on Friday, with classes ending at 2:00pm, Mr. Gagnon agreed to be in the lab until 4:30 to give students a couple of hours to wrap up their projects. A number of students took advantage of each of these extra blocks of time to complete their work, and would perhaps not have been able to submit their projects on time without it.

## 4.8 Due Date

Only three students did not have their projects submitted by the deadline of the following Tuesday and Mr. Gagnon asked that those individuals stay after class to make arrangements with him as to when they were going to submit their videos. Back in the classroom, work on the decade from 1911 to 1920 continued as Mr. Gagnon prepared students for an upcoming midterm exam. The remainder of the block was a review for a midterm test. At the end of the block, Mr. Gagnon set aside fifteen minutes for the students to fill out a post intervention survey and informed them that they might be approached for an interview at some point in the weeks that followed.

# 5: RESULTS I

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the results of a content analysis undertaken on the voice tracks of the student videos. As reading and understanding the results demands a degree of historical knowledge about the Battle of Vimy Ridge, I have chosen to preface the presentation of the results with a bit of background information about the battle, as well as some information about the nature of the text-based sources students had available to them.

### 5.1.1 The Battle of Vimy Ridge

In the nine decades since it was waged, much has been written about the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Though it lasted only four days and was but the opening campaign in the larger British Battle of Arras, which in turn stretched over a span of fifteen miles and was waged over of period of five weeks, the Battle of Vimy Ridge has been given a prominent place in the annals of history—at least in the annals of *Canadian* history. Whether its significance devolves from the military campaign itself or merely the lore and symbolism that have come to surround it, there is little doubt that the Battle of Vimy Ridge has been, and continues to be, historically significant for Canada. It's significance—or in other words what changes this battle wrought, what light it cast elsewhere, and the larger narratives to which the battle has been linked—is a matter of some contention.

In 1917, after considerable pressure had been applied by Ottawa, four divisions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force were consolidated to fight together as the Canadian Corps under the command of British general Sir Julian Byng. Serving under Byng, was Canadian major-general Arthur Currie. While but one of four division commanders working under Byng during the Battle of Vimy Ridge, Currie is often singled out for having replaced Byng as the commander of the Canadian Corps following the victory at Vimy Ridge and remaining in command until the end of the war.

In April of 1917, the soldiers of the Canadian Corps were given their first opportunity to fight together as a national force when they lead an assault on a German stronghold which sat atop a steep ridge just outside the village of Vimy, France. After months of painstaking preparations, the assault began in the early hours of Easter Monday, the 9th of April. Four days later, Allied forces were in control of the entire Ridge.

There is no consensus on what this victory meant in the overall war effort, but prominent Canadian historian Desmond Morton opined that victory in the Battle of Vimy Ridge led to the war ending two years earlier than had been predicted (Morton, 1992).

In the decades following the war, the Battle of Vimy Ridge came to overshadow the other campaigns in which Canadian soldiers took part, and ultimately emerged as an event that stood for the overall Canadian experience in the First World War (Inglis, 1995). Over the years, this battle has also come to take on something of a mythic status for Canadians. This is perhaps attributable

to the poetic license that has oftentimes been taken in some accounts of the battle as well as the ways in which the battle has been linked to the Canadian struggle for sovereignty and independence (Vance, 1997).

### 5.1.2 Sources

To inform their historical accounts, students had direct access to three specific secondary sources as well as any others they chose to seek out on the web or in the library. The first source students had on hand was of course the textbook – Counterpoints (Cranny & Moles, 2001). While the Battle of Vimy Ridge is given relatively more coverage than the other World War I campaigns in which Canadians took part, its treatment is nonetheless limited to a scant two paragraphs. Like many textbooks, the account that Counterpoints contains is stripped of all metadiscourse (Crismore, 1983). Thus there is no argument or elaboration, and the tale it weaves is fact-laden and offers but one perspective.

The “Traces of the Past” website/media kit provided links to the Wikipedia pages for each of the battles in which Canada participated. As the second source available for students to consider, the materials available on the Wikipedia page ("The Battle of Vimy Ridge," 2006, October 1) at the time were considerably more detailed than the textbook. At a word count of 1310 compared to the 336 in the textbook, the Wikipedia page on the battle was clearly quantitatively richer. As it offered a comparison of how the battle has been perceived from within Canada as well as from without, and also addressed the legacy of the battle and the construction and ultimate unveiling of the showy Vimy monument in 1936, the Wikipedia materials were also qualitatively richer.

The final source students had to work with was a handout (see appendix) in which Mr. Gagnon provided some additional materials for students to assess and draw on as they constructed their historical explanations. This document offered students three different perspectives on or interpretations of the battle. The first perspective is of course the traditional narrative as per the textbook, whereby the battle is seen as having led to Canada's independence, and under which the soldiers are seen in a heroic, almost martyred light. The counter-narrative presented is one under which the soldiers are seen less as heroes and more as ordinary men caught in a war of which Canada had no business being a part. This interpretation sees the national founding myth of Vimy Ridge as a way of attaching some importance and meaning to what was otherwise a tremendous waste of human life. The final perspective presented is one that a student in Quebec might take up—wherein the battle is an important victory, but one that is overshadowed by the Conscription Crisis and the resulting vitriol it added to the tensions between the Anglophones and Francophones in Canada.

### 5.1.3 Student Accounts

While students were given two tasks—firstly to tell the story of the battle and secondly to explain its significance—few clean lines can be drawn in the student voice tracks between that which is purely historical narrative and that which is solely an argument for significance. The latter is often dealt with in separate statements as well as being interwoven throughout the narrative. That which the students chose to include in their historical narratives is largely what they considered to be salient about the battle and indicates the interpretive frame

with which they viewed the battle. Additionally, students' choices of what to include shed considerable light on how they understood the battle to be historically significant.

As was detailed in the methods chapter, in order to be able to represent what the students found salient to mention in their historical accounts, a study was made of the source materials students had available (detailed above), as well as various other historical accounts of the battle (Hayes et al., 2007; Inglis, 1995; Morton & Granatstein, 1989). From these materials, a matrix was constructed that reflects the various appeals which have been and can be made as to the significance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge (see Figure 5.1).

In the sections which follow, I examine some of the more frequently used elements from the matrix and draw attention to or further scrutinize some of the more common arguments students made about the significance of the battle.

**Figure 5-1 - Historical Accounts Matrix Results**

| Video number | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 22 | 11* | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Individual or dyad gender | F | F | FF | M | FF | MM | M | M | M | M | F | F | FF | M | FF | FF | F | FF | FM | F | F | FF | |
| Class/Block | Block 1 Mainstream | | | | | | | | | | | | Block 2 Enriched | | | | | | | | | | |
| Video grade % | 89 | 79 | 61 | 71 | 77 | 87 | 78 | 82 | 78 | 86 | 79 | 82 | 79 | 78 | 91 | 91 | 85 | 84 | 91 | 93 | 89 | 87 | |
| **Militarily Significant for the Ultimate Allied Victory** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | TTL |
| Comparisons | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| • Canadians did what French/British failed to do | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | 13 |
| • Lost fewer men than French/British had previously | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | 11 |
| • Lost fewer men than Germans did in the battle | ✓ | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | 3 |
| • Took more land than other allied victories | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | 5 |
| • Took more artillery than other allied victories | | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | 5 |
| • Took more prisoners than other allied victories | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | 6 |
| Spoils of war | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| • Land | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| • Prisoners | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | | 6 |
| • Artillery etc. | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Turning point in the war | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 14 |
| Unique Canadian strategies and planning | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 19 |
| Tactical/strategic value of the ridge | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 15 |
| Helped win the war earlier than expected | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | 3 |
| **Recognition and respect for Canada** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Recognition in US papers | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | 1 |
| French recognition | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| World recognition | | | | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | 8 |
| **Politically Significant for Canada** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| First time Canadian corp assembled | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | 4 |
| Paris Peace Conference | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | 3 |
| Treaty of Versailles | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | 7 |
| League of Nations | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Greater Independence from Britain | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 17 |
| **Socially Significant within Canada** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Social unity or cohesion | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | 8 |
| Social divisiveness | ✓ | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | 6 |
| Conscription Crisis | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | 9 |
| Increased tensions in anglo/franco relations in Canada | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | 8 |
| Increased role for women | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | | | | 2 |
| **Economically Significant for Canada** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Income taxes | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| War debt | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | ✓ | 2 |
| Labour shortages | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | 1 |
| **Memoria/Remembrance** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Vimy Monument | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | 6 |
| Remembrance Day | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | 6 |
| **Other** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Spanish Flu epidemic | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | 2 |

**With teacher permission, video 11 did not focus on the Battle of Vimy Ridge*

### 5.1.4 Military Significance

Many of the students presented arguments regarding the military significance of the battle, primarily in terms of the ultimate Allied victory. While they are written from a Canadian perspective, the thread running through these arguments is that the battle is important because it contributed to the war effort and propelled the Allies toward victory.

#### *5.1.4.1* Comparison

In studying accounts of the battle written during and shortly after the war Inglis (1995) notes that comparisons have frequently been employed in newspaper reports and other tales of the war as a metric for establishing how remarkable the victory at Vimy ridge really was. The coding results indicate that the students also frequently made use of a variety of different comparisons as a way of establishing the significance of this victory. Many of the student accounts note that the task of capturing Vimy Ridge had been tried by the British as well as the French before them, but that these previous attempts had ultimately failed. In addition to succeeding where others had failed, the student arguments are often filled with other comparisons that contrast the spoils of war that the Canadian forces seized as part of their victory to those of previous allied victories. The following excerpt from one of the videos typifies this style of student argument:

> Video 8: In less than 2 hours, Canadian military defeated the Germans at Vimy Ridge and successfully took over the most ground, captured the most prisoners, and took over the largest amount of artillery than any other Allied attack before this time. At the same time, the cost was 3,598 men's lives and another 7,104 wounded. The Canadian armed forces had succeeded. We

lost fewer men than the previous assaults on Vimy. The Germans also suffered a great loss of approximately 20,000 men's lives and 4,000 were captured and taken to POW camps.

Comparisons in the numbers of casualties are common in the student accounts. While these casualty statistics were used by some as a metric to establish the greatness of the victory, others also used them as a means of mitigating the loss of so many Canadian soldiers by suggesting that while the losses suffered by the Canadian forces were great, they were comparatively fewer than either their allies' in prior attempts, or the forces they opposed at the ridge.

Video 18: Canada lost 3,598 men and 7,104 were wounded, but this number was nothing compared to the Germans who had lost 20,000 casualties.

Video 6: Although they lost a dreadful amount of soldiers, it was significantly lower than any previous Allied attempt of re-taking Vimy Ridge.

Video 17: 10,000 lives were taken, but this loss is insignificant compared to the victory of this fight. The soldiers that sacrificed their lives for their country were not forgotten for the Battle at Vimy Ridge was the turning point of this war.

#### 5.1.4.2 Turning point in the war

As can be seen in the excerpt from video 17 immediately above and in that of Video 8 below, another argument put forth by students holds that the loss of so many Canadian soldiers was not in vain, because the victory that their deaths made possible was a turning point in the war. This is a common argument in the mythic tale of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, but it is one that is contested by historians (Hayes et al., 2007; Inglis, 1995) who suggest that other campaigns in

which Canadians were prominent, such as Passchendaele or Amiens, had a greater impact on the outcome of the war.

Video 8: This event was a turning point for the whole war. As the success of the Canadian forces, it raised the morale enough for us to capture more and more strategic points. This on the other hand caused the Germans to push and push too hard in France until they eventually tired themselves out too much to carry on that even the Generals knew the war was over.

#### 5.1.4.3 Stressing the strategic value of the ridge

Another means of establishing the importance of the battle used by students and historians alike has entailed stressing the tactical and strategic value of the ridge itself. This element is in some ways tied to the previous one in that there is a tacit argument in some of the accounts that gaining the strategic high ground of Vimy Ridge is precisely what made the win at Vimy a turning point for the war. The textbook merely refers to the ridge as strategically important, with no attempt to give an idea of the geography nor any explanation as to what made the ridge strategically valuable. According to military historians, the strategic value of the ridge inhered in the sight lines it afforded to three key areas along the western front—a southerly view to the town of Arras, a northerly view to Lens, and an easterly view to the Douai Plain (Inglis, 1995). The Wikipedia article on the battle, the only source students had direct access to which provided any explanation of the ridge's value, describes it as follows:

> "The ridge, stretching from the town of Vimy to Givenchy-en-Gohelle, was a crucial point that allowed the Germans to control much of the surrounding territory. The ridge was the only major barrier keeping the allies from the wide open Lens-Douai plain" ("The Battle of Vimy Ridge," 2006, October 1, ¶2).

The great strategic value of the ridge thus made its capture and the Canadian victory at the ridge all the more significant. Some of the students were able to present a clear argument as to why the ridge was valuable and how well it had been fortified by the Germans:

> Video 7: It was one of the most heavily defended points on the Western Front. The ridge stretched from the town of Vimy to Givenchy-en-Gohelle. It allowed the Germans better control of the surrounding territory. The Germans had fortified Vimy Ridge with various tunnels, trenches, massive artillery, and numerous machine gun nests.

Other accounts were far less nuanced and, following the myth in true form, assigned the victory greater importance than is perhaps warranted:

> Video 9: Vimy Ridge was controlled by the Germans since 1914. Vimy Ridge was a very tactical point and the Allies had to regain Vimy Ridge in order to win the war.

#### 5.1.4.4 Stressing unique Canadian strategies and planning

Since the earliest accounts of the battle, Canadians have been laying claim to much of the credit for the highly successful strategies used by their forces (Inglis, 1995). However, the legitimacy of these claims is rather questionable (Humphries, 2007; Sheffield, 2007). For Canadians, the Battle of Vimy Ridge has become something of a founding myth—a heroic tale with 'larger than life', mythic qualities that attempts to explain how Canada came to be (Vance, 1997).

The student accounts are heavily imbued with qualities of this founding myth, in which certain aspects of the battle—especially those that make

Canadians look the best—are embellished. The arguments regarding the unique Canadian strategies were ones that enjoyed a great deal of embellishment in the student accounts. The perpetuation of that nationalistic mythology and lore that is so enthusiastically reproduced in the student accounts deserves examination, and will thus be addressed in the discussion. In this section, I will simply be presenting the arguments and appeals the students put forth.

The level of detail provided, as well as the language employed, indicates that many students found the various battle preparations—including the construction of a replica of the German trenches and the weeks of drills and rehearsals the soldiers underwent prior to the assault—to be an important aspect of the battle's significance, or at least something which held a certain fascination for them.

In particular, there are two terms related to these so-called Canadian military strategies which students seemed to find particularly appealing—the *creeping barrage*, which appeared in twelve of the accounts, and the *Vimy glide*, which appeared in seven.

Video 8: The Canadians prevailed by bringing forth new tactics and strategies that turned the war around. Led by General Julian Byng, he had his men rehearse their movements of the *creeping barrage* over and over again to get precise timing. While having his artillery teams bombard the Germans to get their distancing right. He had fighter planes fly by and do reconnaissance over the area to search for ways they could move around the battlefield. Meanwhile, he had engineers create tunnels to move soldiers forward without being seen.

Video 21: The Canadian troops decided to adopt a new war technique called the *Vimy glide* which they practiced ad nauseam to get around the German troops. Basically, the troops advanced in slow, measured steps while their comrades fired from safe places behind them into the metered space in front of the advancing soldiers so that the advancing soldiers could gain ground.

Contrary to many of the student accounts, the *creeping barrage*—essentially a shield of artillery fire intended to provide cover for the advancing infantry—was not a Canadian innovation. On this topic, Inglis writes, "While the *creeping barrage* is often credited to the Canadians at Vimy (by Canadian authors) the French first used artillery in this way at Verdun. What can be argued, however, is that the Canadians, as they did with many innovations, perfected it and made it their own (1995, p. 30). As for the *Vimy glide*, neither the textbook, nor Mr. Gagnon's notes mention it, and although there is a brief reference to it in the current Wikipedia page on the Battle of Vimy Ridge, ("The Battle of Vimy Ridge," 2008, June 23), the version available to students at the time made no mention of it, thus students must have found another online source for their coverage of this term. Interestingly, five of the seven who reference the *Vimy glide* are actually describing the *creeping barrage* as opposed to the slow and measured walk—or glide—soldiers used to pace their pursuit of that barrage.

### 5.1.5 Politically/Nationally Significant for Canada

Many of the student videos started with a discussion of how the Canadian victory at Vimy ridge was militarily significant for the war effort as a whole, and

then narrowed their focus to address how the battle might have affected Canada as a nation.

### 5.1.6 Recognition and Respect

A surprising number of the students highlight the world recognition and the respect with which Canada was lauded as something that made the battle significant. In the following excerpt—although they are connecting the battle to the larger narrative of Canadian independence—the students twice underscore the importance of world recognition.

> Video 15: The Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge forever changed the way Canadians were perceived by the rest of the world. The result of the battle showed the leadership, bravery, and skilfulness of Canadian soldiers. This victory surprised the world and proved that Canada was ready to step out from under Britain's command and be a nation on its own.

### 5.1.7 Greater independence from Britain

As can be noted in the preceding excerpt from video 15, the notion of increased Canadian independence was, for many students, tied to how Canada was perceived internationally and how that perception shifted as a result of the prowess of Canadian forces on the battlefields of World War I.

> Video 22: This battle ended up to be one of the most significant battles of World War I. Because of their contribution to eventual victory, Canadians earned themselves a place at the Treaty of Versailles where they had the right to have a separate signature on the treaty which tells us that the Canadians were on the road of becoming independent.

Some of the videos, as is evidenced in the excerpt from video 22 above, showed the basic chain of causality that led to eventual political independence

for Canada—thus connecting the Battle of Vimy Ridge to the larger narrative of the fight for Canadian independence which began in the decades preceding the war and ultimately became official with the signing of the Statute of Westminster in 1931. A troubling number, however, saw Canadian independence as being an immediate and direct result of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Video 17: Vimy Ridge—the birth of a nation. Independence for Canada. For the people who took part in the war, for those who lost someone in the war, and most importantly, for those who died in the war—not only did we gain independence, but respect. We did what couldn't be done. Vimy Ridge, April 9th, 1917—the day Canada was seen in a new light from the people of the world.

### 5.1.8 Socially Significant for Canada

In a book about the life of her late husband, the Viscountess Byng of Vimy quotes General Byng as having said of the battle:

> There they stood on Vimy Ridge that ninth day of April, 1917, men from Quebec shoulder to shoulder to men from Ontario; men from the Maritimes with men from British Columbia and there was forged a nation, tempered by the fires of sacrifice and hammered on the anvil of high adventure (Byng, 1945, p. 118).

In addition to its military and political significance, many arguments have been made as to the social significance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge for the people of Canada.

### 5.1.9 Unity

In similar fashion to the Byng quote from above, some students argued that the battle united Canadians both on the battlefields and at home.

Video 8: Back at home, it gave us all a feeling of being a nation. Because we were the only ones to take over Vimy Ridge, while taking over the most ground, artillery, and prisoners at one time, making Canada feel like an independent country.

Some contrasted the perceived unity—either of having men from all nine provinces fighting together, or the unity of pride felt on the home from—with the divisiveness of the war.

Video 18: In the end, Vimy, a battle half way around the world from Canada, made a great impact on our developing country. The men at war were brought together, but the men at home were divided.

### 5.1.10 Divisiveness

Describing the country's World War I experience, Canadian historian Desmond Morton suggested that, "If War is one of those shared experiences which transform a people into a nation, Canada indeed became a country of two nations" (quoted in Inglis, 1995, p. 98). In analyzing the affects of the war on Canada, many historians, like Morton, find the divisive effects of the war to be historically significant—especially in mapping the relationship between anglophones and francophones in Canada. While the Battle of Vimy Ridge was, in and of itself, not divisive, through the heavy casualties and the resulting need for more men to fight, the battle has been connected to the Conscription Crisis of 1917 in Canada, and thus to the wider feelings of acrimony and resentment that the war stirred up between Québecers and the rest of Canada. While many students did not make these connections independently, with a prompt or two by Mr. Gagnon to try to find any larger narratives to which the battle might be linked,

nine videos drew connections to conscription and, of those, six mentioned how the conscription crisis led to increased tensions in Canada.

> Video 3: After Vimy, there were very few volunteers to go help fight in the war and replace casualties. In 1917, Borden passed the Military Service Act which allowed for conscription, forcing men to go overseas to fight in the war. French Canadians and Québecers were highly against conscription, and marches were organized against Borden in protest. Many people think that conscription separated the country from the English and the French.

## 5.2 Discussion

A goal of the design was to have students engage with the second order concept of historical significance through the three main criteria as established by the BHT framework. I begin the discussion by examining the way in which the students engaged with these criteria and then proceed to examine what else the findings of the content analysis reveal about the degree to which the students engaged in historical thinking.

### 5.2.1 Resulting in Change

Assessing the body of work produced by Mr. Gagnon's two classes as a whole, this particular historical significance criterion was perhaps the easiest for students to work with. All of the student videos identified ways in which the battle, or particular aspects of it, resulted in change. Influenced by the work of Partington (1980), Seixas' BHT framework asks students to consider the *depth* of change, the *quantity*—often measured by how many people this change affected, and its *durability*.

The following excerpt from one of the videos shows a direct appeal regarding the significance of the battle on this basis, and represents the more sophisticated end of the range of work seen in this study:

> Video 20: For Canadians, Vimy Ridge was the most significant battle in the war. It was a major turning point then and it led to *deep and long lasting change*--both positive and negative. Canada began to grow to autonomy, something that we enjoy today, but also lead to conscription--forcing people to enlist.

This student makes a reasonably distinguished appeal regarding the historical significance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge on the basis of it resulting in change that was both *deep* and *durable*. Few of the student accounts manage to use this criterion as well. While many students conclude their historical accounts by asserting significance due to certain changes that were wrought, they often fail to substantiate that claim in any way. An account which might be assessed at the midpoint in the range of work using this criterion is as follows:

> Video 2: The war had lasted a long four years and during those years it had changed many lives. Even after those four years, the changes still took place for many Canadians. Because of this war, it gave Canada a chance to develop as an autonomic (*sic)* country that fights for freedom and human rights.

This student is aware of the criterion and attempts to use it in order to assert significance by suggesting that the war "changed many lives"—thus appealing to *resulting in change* on the basis of *quantity*. Stating "even after those four years" is an attempt to further appeal to the *durability* of the changes. The student would have fully succeeded in using this criterion had she explained

what those changes were that had occurred in so many lives. Instead she moves forward with “because of this war” to further consequences of the war—and a different appeal for significance without ever completing the first.

The excerpt below is representative of the student accounts which state that the battle was significant without actually providing any substantial assessment of how or why this is the case:

> Video 3: The Battle at Vimy Ridge was a significant change in history. Many people lost their lives and were injured at Vimy.

Besides appealing to *resulting in change* on the basis of *quantity* as represented here by “many people,” the students who wrote this narrative do not take their appeal for significance any further. Among the possible sub-criteria for *resulting in change,* an argument based on *quantity* has the most difficulty standing on its own. Simply because many people are affected by an event does not necessarily mean something will be remembered or deemed historically significant. While estimates from 1920 suggest that 21.5 million people died during the three waves Spanish Flu epidemic, more recent estimates have suggested that death tolls may have actually been as high as 50 million (Johnson & Mueller, 2002). Even if one takes the more conservative of those two estimates, the epidemic still took more than twice as many lives as that of whole the First World War. In comparing the significance of these two events, quantity is perhaps a factor in their relative significance, but the fact that the epidemic has been all but forgotten until recent threats of pandemics such as the SARS

outbreak have given it greater resonance, would seem to suggest that quantity cannot stand on its own as an indication of historical significance.

### 5.2.2 Revealing

By way of introducing this criterion, Counsell writes, “Historians try to find out what happened in the past. Thus a past event can become historically significant because of the light it sheds on *some other facet* of the past” (Counsell, 2004, p. 114). While clearly solid grounds upon which to establish the historical significance of an event or person, assisting students to understand how an event might bring something noteworthy to light is greatly complicated by the typical lack of breadth and depth in students’ historical knowledge. As such, students are at a disadvantage when it comes to negotiating the tensions between past and present (Seixas, 1993).

Added to this is arguably an additional challenge in that the Battle of Vimy Ridge is perhaps not the best event with which to employ the criterion *revealing*. While certainly significant to Canadians, the battle is seldom used in historical accounts as a means of shedding light on enduring or emerging issues. Rather, the significance of the battle is structural and better revealed in the way that the battle can be seen to be embedded in other historical narratives.

With these challenges in mind, the excerpt below shows an attempt by one of the participants to discuss what the battle reveals to us in the present. The student here seems to be abstracting a truism from the past that promotes

cooperation, and which, if adhered to, might lead to a utopian future in which Canada has no enemies—only allies:

> Video 17: This may have happened years ago, but it still affects us today. It shows the unification of both Britain and Canada and how we were able to work together to defeat our enemy. It shows that not all countries are diverse as it seems and it gives us hope that one day we can see everyone as our allies instead of our enemies.

In the following video excerpt, the student abstracts a very similar lesson of teamwork and cooperation, but adds that it is useful not only on the battlefield, but is applicable in our everyday life:

> Video 19: We can also learn from our successes and failures in war and find the importance of cooperation in order to achieve a collective goal—a lesson that can not only be used on the battle field but in our everyday lives as well to solve problems.

Seixas (1993) suggests that given their lack of historical knowledge, students may be tempted to draw, "…unwarranted 'lessons' from the past by ignoring the historical *mentalité*, the culture in which the historical actors were embedded" (p. 769). This very much appears to be what many of the participants have done while working on this project.

The same student who abstracted the lesson of cooperation above in the excerpt from video 19, elsewhere in her narrative managed to use the *revealing* criterion in a comparatively sophisticated way in that she sees the past as foundational to the present and something which can shed light on present concerns:

Video 19: The past gives us insight into Quebec's objection for example through the Conscription Crisis and their wish of becoming their own independent state. We live in a world that is constantly changing with new discoveries and interactions and even though we are focused on the future, we must not forget the past--it makes up the foundation that we build on.

That many of the students in this study did abstract superficial lessons from the past is clear. Why they did so is very much unclear, and deserves further study. O'Neill and Weiler (2006) found students to be transferring to their history work, practices that they had learned in English classes. It is conceivable that some of the students in this study are doing likewise, and are thus attempting to tease out the 'moral of the story' as they might do with a fable or story in English class. However, the students may also be operating under the assumption that they are *meant* to be drawing these lessons from the past due to a belief that the very purpose of studying history is to learn from it in order to avoid repeating mistakes of the past. The wording of the following two video excerpts lends credence to the latter interpretation:

Video 3: Do you think we can learn from mistakes we have made in the past or will history repeat?

Video 18: We at least owe the heroes of yesterday who died to end future wars not to make the same bloody mistakes as we did in the past, or else their deaths with outstanding bravery would be for nothing.

Partington suggests, "There has been a deep erosion of the belief that the study of the past enables us to make accurate predictions about the future or to judge with confidence what are the most significant or fundamental features of the present" (1980, pp. 14-15). While that may be true, there remains in the

public consciousness a conception of history which very much involves abstracting lessons. Remembrance Day rhetoric, to which students are exposed throughout their education, often suggests that honouring the veterans and fallen soldiers means learning from the past and not repeating the same mistakes. With this understanding of history in the public consciousness, it may prove difficult to get students to move beyond drawing lessons from the past.

### 5.2.3 Counterfactuals

Another indication that the pupils in this study were having trouble negotiating between the present and the past is demonstrated in the number of unreinforced counterfactual statements the students employed in their accounts. A counterfactual statement typically runs along the lines of: "If X had not happened, then Y might have been the result". Although they were not asked to do so for this project, eight students employed what amount to rather insubstantial counterfactual statements in their attempts to identify how the contemporary world has been affected by the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Video 19: Without their heroic actions, the world we live in would be very different today.

Video 13: Vimy should be remembered for its incredible success and for lives sacrificed. Without their timely sacrifice, we would be living in a very different world.

Neither of these students follows up in any way with an explanation as to *how* the world might have been different as a direct result of the battle. Indeed,

only two of the eight counterfactual statements employed by students in their videos offer any explanation as to how the world might be different:

Video 9: Victory at Vimy Ridge came at a high price, with more than 10,000 casualties for the Canadians, but if it wasn't for them, the war might not have ended and the world today might be controlled by the Germans.

Video 12: If the soldiers were unable to succeed, much of Canada would probably still be influenced by the British.

As was the case above with the lessons students felt the need to draw from the past, the fact that so many of the students used empty counterfactual statements like those shown here, underscores the degree to which some of the students are struggling to understand how the past can aid us in understanding the present.

### 5.2.4 Part of a Bigger Story

"What makes any particular event significant," Seixas asserts, "is the richness and complexity of its connections to other events and processes, and ultimately to ourselves" (1993, p. 768). Like the *revealed* criterion, this too requires tremendous depth and breadth in historical knowledge in order to make the various connections. Unlike the *revealed* criterion, however, the Battle of Vimy Ridge is a very rich topic to work with when it comes to drawing connections to one of the larger historical narratives with which it might be associated.

Although income tax and the changing role of women came up in class while the scriptwriting was going on, and despite Mr. Gagnon having provided

“signposts” (Bradshaw, 2006) as to how these narratives might be linked broadly to the war and from there to the individual battles, remarkably few videos mentioned these topics.

Of the narratives to which the battle might be linked, there are only two that received serious coverage in the student videos. The first narrative students connected to the Battle of Vimy Ridge is that of Canada’s eventual independence from Britain. However, as was noted above, many of the students saw Canada’s independence as more of a direct result of the battle as opposed to a large and rather complex narrative into which the battle might be seen to be embedded.

The other common narrative to which students drew lines is that of conscription. Some students were able to provide a fairly nuanced account that traced the lines from the high casualty rates to the need for more men and thus the decision to conscript men. However, it must be noted that students were highly encouraged by Mr. Gagnon to connect to a larger narrative and when they struggled to come up with one on their own, they were prompted to look at conscription. Given the number of prompts from Mr. Gagnon, to consider conscription or one of the other narratives that might be linked to the war, it is curious that only about half of the videos made any attempt to connect their accounts to a larger narrative.

With regard to the conscription crisis, in the interviews I asked the students who opted *not* to connect their accounts to conscription if they had considered making that connection and their reasoning for not doing so

especially given Mr. Gagnon's encouragements. The following are some of the responses I received:

Dan: "I think I chose not to do it because it was a little bit harder to do. For me. And because everyone else was doing it and uh and not so much everyone else was doing it, but um, I'm trying to remember now. But I think it didn't fit in with my script because I wrote it and then I didn't have specific details like Mr. [Gagnon] wanted like so I chose the Spanish 'Flu 'cause I could add it in pretty quickly and it still fit pretty well."

Sharon: "Well conscription kind of happened later on anyway and it wasn't really part of Vimy Ridge. And 'cause he [Mr. Gagnon] wanted a limit too, right, and it was getting long."

James:"Well we didn't want to go into much political things we just wanted to show, um like—."

Allan: "That wouldn't really fit in place with what we were aiming for."

James: "We were just trying to aim for the significance of the military actions at Vimy ridge and what they're remembered for and stuff -- you know, like what happened beforehand and stuff like that.

James and Allan seem to have viewed the military significance as the most important aspect of the battle, to the exclusion of other topics. The other two responses would seem to indicate that these students, and perhaps others, had trouble seeing how conscription factored in. This would seem to suggest that at least some of the students did not understand this criterion in the historical significance framework and thus failed to see how something might be considered to be significant not (or not only) because of the event itself, but because of the larger, more complex narratives into which it feeds.

On the whole, connecting their accounts of the battle to other, larger narratives was an area in which the participants were weak. Most of the students required the support and scaffolding Mr. Gagnon provided because so many of those other narratives are events or trends which had not yet been covered in the course. Thus it is uncertain how much progress students are able to make with this criterion on this particular topic—at least in the early parts of the academic year before they have covered more Canadian 20th century history.

#### 5.2.4.1 Remembered

In addition to telling the history of the battle and explaining its significance for Canadians, the assignment sheet asked students to answer why the battle *should* be remembered. This is a different way of asking why the battle is significant without actually using the framework and criteria. Although this question was intended to provide an alternate way for students to look at the significance of the battle, it seems instead to have prompted many of the students to repeat platitudes of remembrance. The imagined audience for the videos was the school Remembrance Day assembly which would take place a couple of weeks after the project was completed. Thus while commemoration and the rhetoric of Remembrance Day were bound to come up, this seems to have sometimes been to the detriment of deep assessment of the historical significance of the battle:

Video 7: We should therefore remember the Battle of Vimy Ridge as a battle where Canadians showed bravery, inspiration, and the strength of one nation. We must also remember the many soldiers who made sacrifices for our better world.

Video 10: We should remember the Battle of Vimy Ridge by remembering the heroic souls that had died, during Remembrance Day, and honour and respect the veteran who have taken part in this horrible war.

### 5.2.5 Alternate or Conflicting Perspectives

As was outlined above, Mr. Gagnon's handout for the video project contained three different perspectives on the Battle of Vimy Ridge and its significance for Canadians—the traditional narrative, a counter-narrative and a Québécois perspective. In addition to these alternate perspectives provided by Mr. Gagnon, the Wikipedia article—as it appeared while students were working on the project—also provided an additional alternate perspective by addressing the fact that elsewhere in the world, no one refers to the Battle of Vimy Ridge, but rather see those four days when the Canadian Corp launched an attack on German strongholds on Vimy Ridge as simply one of the campaigns that compose the Battle of Arras. The Wikipedia article (2006) also addresses the British artillery and infantry contributions as well as air support for the assault—which calls into question the degree to which this really was a purely Canadian victory.

It is not entirely surprising that none of the student videos chose to relate any version of the battle or its significance that deviated from the traditional narrative. Video 9 begins very dramatically with: "It was a European war that Canada should not have been a part of," but then moves on to relate an account of the traditional narrative and never comes back to the argument that Canada had no business being involved in a European war.

By providing alternate interpretations of the war in the handout, it was not necessarily assumed that students would attempt to present one of those alternate viewpoints, merely that they would acknowledge them and use them to present a more balanced account that took into consideration that historical significance is both something which is contested and something which varies over time and from culture to culture.

Despite being encouraged to do so on several occasions, only two of the videos acknowledge that there are alternate perspectives one might take up when considering the significance of the battle. In order to really and truly understand historical significance, students need to apprehend that significance is something that varies over time and from one culture to the next. That so few of the narratives acknowledged other perspectives is striking and clearly demonstrates that students need more assistance in coming to understand the contested and relative nature of historical significance. Given that there are so many perspectives that have and can be taken regarding this event, the Battle of Vimy Ridge is ripe with opportunity. Clearly though, different scaffolds need to be in place to guide students to acknowledging them.

### 5.2.6 Mythic Elements

> To remember Vimy, for example, is to recall the cold, misty Easter Monday morning, the thousands of soldiers of the four Canadian divisions fighting together for the first time, moving out of their trenches against German lines that had resisted earlier French and British attacks. So perfect were the plans, so determined and well-prepared the attackers, that the ridge was taken in a great victory. The ten thousand casualties suffered in that victory ensured that no one could feel much glory, but the pride in achievement was real.

> So it deserved to be. At Vimy, Brennan said, Canada—English Canada, at least—came of age under heart-rending circumstances. The great war monument there, the largest erected by any of the belligerents, expressed Canada's pride and sorrow, for two of the components of the nation's collective memory" (Granatstein, 2007 p. 139).

As in the above account of the battle, penned by renowned Canadian historian Jack Granatstein, there is a certain tone to many of the student films that is mythic in nature and imbued with an emotional intensity. In the student accounts, the Canadian forces are often painted as an indomitable force that did what others had deemed to be impossible—and they did so while incurring fewer casualties and taking more spoils of war. There is evidence of these mythic aspects in more than just the details and structuring of the accounts—the language and rhetoric employed in a number of videos is also striking:

Video 8: And we always remember it as Canada—the army that prevailed when no others could.

Video 18: The thought of penetrating through this fortress was almost non-existent—until the Canadians came.

The students are of course not alone in recounting mythologized tales of the battle. Many accounts of the battle tend to emphasize certain aspects of the assault that present Canadians in a heroic light, while airbrushing out little details like a whole brigade of British soldiers that fought alongside the Canadian forces, or the fact that the so-called uniquely Canadian strategies which contributed to the success of the campaign were perhaps not quite so unique or so Canadian as the reports often indicate (Humphries, 2007).

The emergence of the Battle of Vimy Ridge as a national myth in Canada has been traced and studied by historians (Inglis, 1995, Vance, 1997). The romanticized and mythologized version of the war took shape in the decade following war as Canadians were coming to terms with the atrocities of the war.

> Canada's memory of the war conferred upon those four years a legacy, not of despair, aimlessness, and futility, but of promise, certainty, and goodness. It assured Canadians that the war had been a just one, fought to defend Christianity and Western civilization, and that Canada's sons and daughters had done well by their country and would not be forgotten for their sacrifices. To these great gifts, the myth added the nation-building thesis. By encouraging people to focus their thoughts on a time when the nation appeared to be united in a common cause, the memory of the war could prove that the twentieth century did indeed belong to Canada (Vance, 1997 p. 266).

Vance proposes that Canadians from all walks of life embraced this highly mythologized version of the battle not because any particular class or group forced it upon them as the “official story”, but rather for the reason that this version, “…answered a need, explained the past, or offered the promise of a better future” (ibid., p. 267). Vance further proposes that ordinary Canadians did not merely adopt and perpetuate the myth, but that they actually worked to create it. “By their very actions, each of these people played a role in nurturing the nation's memory of the war and giving it life within their consciousness as Canadians. That memory was not conferred on them from above; it sprouted from the grief, the hope, and the search for meaning of a thousand Canadian communities” (ibid.).

None of the sources with which students were provided, contained overtly mythologized elements. The textbook account did of course describe the battle

in a manner that flattered Canada, but its retelling of the battle is rather subdued. The Wikipedia page, arguably policed by an international community, presented a reasonably balanced account of the battle. Likewise, Mr. Gagnon's handout was also quite even-handed in that it presented the mythologized version of the story, but then contrasted it with two competing versions of the story.

While several generations removed from the immediate sense of the loss of so many young men, the mix of victory with sacrifice and of international respect for Canada with national pride that infuses the Vimy myth is evident in the student videos. The students in Mr. Gagnon's two social studies classes clearly embraced and readily reproduced the mythologized version of the past.

That the myth was not overtly represented in any of the sources they had to work with, suggests that students perpetuated the romanticized version of the past on their own. There are at least two explanations as to why they may have done so. It might be that the myth served the same need it did when it originally emerged in years after the war as described above by Vance. Or it may be due to the fact that the myth has simply become a part of our collective memory of the event and has thus has been woven in to our sense of national identity.

> In the discourse surrounding national identity, death, suffering and sacrifice in the service of one's country occupy a central position. Renan captured this point well in his 1882 Sorbonne lecture, 'Qu'est qu'une nation?' (Renan, 1887): The individual's willingness to transcend himself and face the prospect of dying for 'the big solidarity' is the ultimate touchstone of patriotism and national identity. This in turn becomes a (if not the) constituent element in any convincing definition of a nation—less in terms of the actual deaths and sacrifices rendered up, more in terms of their consequences for the historical consciousness of any given nation,

> for national mythologies of war, death and victory (Hedetoft, 1993, p. 281).

That Vimy is a topic that has been so mythologized presents a challenge for covering the battle in the classroom. Although most historians have abandoned attempts to secure history as an objective science, there nonetheless remains a desire to give as balanced and credible a representation of the past as is possible. The challenge of retelling the story of the Battle of Vimy Ridge lies in the way so many Canadian accounts of this battle have these ideological and nationalistic elements threaded through them and thus can often be unbalanced and lacking credibility.

Granatstein, who penned, “Who Killed Canadian History”, might be quite happy to have Canadian high school students learn the mythologized version of the past—in spite of the lack of balance. Referring to the Pierre Berton’s popular histories, Granatstein suggests that he “…is probably responsible for much of the little interest there is in Canada’s past. His books…are exciting tales that have consciously tried to create Canadian myths and heroes. The historical minutiae are sacrificed for the telling incident, but that is understandable, even necessary (Granatstein, 2007, p. 12).

The issue at play here ties in with the desire to have students presenting—or at least acknowledging—multiple perspectives to the battle. As has been indicated above, negotiating between the past and the present is something that tends to seriously challenge students. So, it would appear, does negotiating between history and myth. Simply reproducing the national founding

myth version of the battle might promote citizenship and national identity in students. However, if accepted whole, without understanding that it is a construction with highly romanticized elements and that it emerged because it answered a need and served a purpose, students are not fully engaging in historical thinking.

# 6: RESULTS II

This chapter presents the content analysis results for the remaining cinematic elements—sound effects, music, titles, effects, and visual images.

## 6.1 Motivational Framework

Throughout this chapter and the one that follows, I draw on a framework presented by Nichols (1991) who suggests, “Our procedures for viewing documentary will include ways of assigning motivation to what we see. As a formal term motivation refers to the way the presence of an object is justified in relation to the text” (p. 26). Applying Nichol’s framework to each of the cinematic elements examined in this chapter afforded me a means of examining the media objects with which the students chose to construct their documentaries.

### 6.1.1 Realism

Nichols proposes that *realism* is the primary motivation for the placement of an object in a documentary/non-fiction text. He suggests an object is included in a text on the basis of realism “…because of its function in the historical world” (1991, p. 26). In this case, an editor may edit an image into their documentary sequence based on it depicting someone or something that was actually part of the historical event under consideration.

### 6.1.2 Functionalism

A second form of motivation for the inclusion of particular images is one Nichols calls *functional*. In this case, the visual object is used in the film because it serves a purpose in the overall argument that is being presented. Functionally speaking, an image of a corpse may be instrumental in an argument that war is appalling and comes at a tremendous cost in human lives and suffering.

### 6.1.3 Intertextuality

*Intertextual* motivation is typically at play when the inclusion of an object relates to expectations of a particular genre or style of film. Speaking of such objects, Nichols writes, “They have the force of conventions and help define a genre, subgenre, or mode of documentary production.” (ibid.) An image is intertextually motivated if it has become conventionalized and is thus *expected* to be in a program of a certain type. War documentaries, for example, conventionally include imagery of the carnage and butchery that tend to accompany large-scale international conflicts—thus images of fallen men are standard fare in such documentaries and the use of this type of image is intertextually motivated, at least in part.

### 6.1.4 Formalism

The final motivational form, and the one which Nichols considers the least common to documentary films, is *formal* motivation. Nichols draws on the artistic definition of formalism, which emphasizes compositional and aesthetic elements such as colour, line, shape and texture as opposed to realistic elements such as

context, and content. If an image were selected on the basis of an aesthetic quality, its inclusion in a text would be formally motivated.

## 6.2 Music

From the World War One era hit “Keep the Home Fires Burning” to the much more recent love ballad “Far Away” by Nickelback, there was tremendous range in the music students chose to accompany their narratives. Twelve of the twenty-one videos contain at least one piece of music. In the *Traces of the Past* media kit, students were provided with various musical options. Much of the First World War era music is now in the public domain, thus a number of songs that were popular hits during the First World War were collected for students to work with.

Anticipating that students might find the music dated and worthy of their disdain, I was surprised by the way in which many of the students engaged with these songs. My field notes from the first couple of days of the intervention are filled with incidents involving the students’ interactions with these media. The first day working in the computer lab with the media kits in Mr. Gagnon’s mainstream class, I observed two girls who kept playing one particular song over and over. At one point later in the block I further observed them printing out the lyrics of the song and then swaying together in time to the music as they sang along with the cheeky *Oh! It’s a Lovely War!* (Long & Scott, 1917). Likely because of the ironic title and lyrics, along with the upbeat and jaunty rhythm, this song was one that often pealed out of tinny computer speakers in the lab at Oceanview. The first verse and chorus of this song are as follows:

Up to your waist in water,
Up to your eyes in slush,
Using the kind of language
That makes the sergeants blush;
Who wouldn't join the army?
That's what we all enquire.
Don't we pity the poor civilians
Sitting beside the fire?

*Chorus:*
Oh! Oh! Oh! It's a lovely war,
Who wouldn't be a soldier, eh ?
Oh, it's a shame to take the pay
(Long & Scott, 1917).

One or other of the classic gems like this one (in which the students seemed to take so much delight) found their way into four of the student videos. Three videos used popular military bugle calls *Taps*(2) or *To the Colors* (1), which were recorded by a Canadian military band and allowed to be used for educational purposes. Despite the students having been cautioned against it, five of the videos contained copyright protected music.

#### 6.2.1.1 Music Use Motivations

Music is one of the categories of media objects which might be motivated by any of the four forms identified by Nichols. Further, it is likely that the music selections made by students in this study were influenced by several, if not all of the four motivations.

Use of musical pieces such as *Oh! It's A Lovely War!* and *Keep the Home Fires Burning* (Novello & Ford, 1914) was likely motivated by realism as these songs were popular during the time of the First World War and deal with the realities of the war and how people coped.

Classical Greek philosophers viewed music as something which stirred human passions and thus considered it rhetorical in nature as they saw it as something which was created to sway the minds and actions of those who heard it (Cross & Tolbert, 2008). Modern philosophers are less concerned with music's rhetorical qualities and more interested in its communicative abilities, and thus tend to emphasize the way music either expresses or embodies emotion (ibid.). Unlike the ironic nature of the upbeat and jaunty tunes from the war era, much of the modern music that students employed has a sad or wistful feel to it. In several of the cases, the students used only a few seconds at the opening of a popular song, cutting just before the artist began singing. For example, one documentary opens with the first twenty-three seconds *Tears and Rain* performed by James Blunt (2004). It is likely that the lyrics did not suit the tenor of the documentary, which is why the students faded out the music just before Blunt began to sing them.

Not all of the students who used modern music selected a strictly instrumental portion, the producers of one of the videos used about 45 seconds of a song called *Far Away* performed by Canadian rock band Nickelback. The lyrics of the portion of the song that is included in the video are as follows:

This time, This place
Misused, Mistakes
Too long, Too late
Who was I to make you wait?
Just one chance
Just one breath
Just in case there's just one left
'Cause you know,
you know, you know

[CHORUS]
That I love you
I have loved you all along
And I miss you

(Kroeger, Adair, Kroeger, & Peake, 2005)

As the lyrics suggest, this is a love ballad. What they are unable to convey, however, is the intensity of the song as it is an example of what is often referred to as a “power ballad”[5].

One way to interpret the use of this piece of music is to assume the lyrics seemed relatively unimportant to the students and that the music was selected to convey a general feeling of regret and reminiscence. However, the anthemic feel to this song is such that it would not be out of place at the end of a summer blockbuster as the credits roll. Thus, is entirely possible that there is a strong intertextual element involved in the use of this music--especially as it was placed at the end of the student video underscoring the credits.

[5] A “power ballad" is a type of song performed (but not necessarily written) by a hard rock or heavy metal band that is atypical of the songs defined by the hard rock and heavy metal genres. To emphasize the emotional aspect of a power ballad, crowds customarily hold up lit lighters.

Formal motivations are unlikely, but cannot be ruled out entirely as it is possible the students' selection of music had something to do with the aesthetic qualities of the piece itself.

## 6.3 Sound Effects

In video projects like this one that do not have access to footage with synchronous picture and sound, a *sense* of realism that is not afforded by silent video can oftentimes be created by the use of a few carefully placed sound effects. Ken Burns—one of the most prominent documentary filmmakers at the time of this writing—makes excellent use of a wide variety of sound effects as one way to bring distant events such as the American Civil War to life.

The first generation of media kit CDs that were field-tested in the pilot of the design (discussed in Chapter 2) included a series of battle and weaponry sounds effects. That set of sound effects was subsequently removed from the second generation of discs that were used in this study. In that initial field test, a number of disruptive incidents occurred involving the sound effects. On such occasions, students—oftentimes male, but not exclusively—would turn up the volume and repeatedly play machine gun sounds, explosions, and other battle sounds to the point that work everywhere in the lab would come to a complete halt amid the cacophony. At one point, I observed a student gesturing like a conductor, cuing several of his classmates from around the lab as they played different sounds. Although it started as good-natured enjoyment, it appeared as though a couple of students began using it as a means of pushing boundaries. Mr. Gagnon quickly put a stop to it each time and got everyone back on task, but

the sounds were nonetheless deemed to be a distraction. As this type of 'jam session' was not an isolated incident, it was decided that the sound effects needed to be more difficult for students to access, but still available. On the second generation of media discs, the entire batch of sound effects was removed. The page that had housed them remained, informing anyone who clicked on it that sound effects were available upon request. Those who did make such a request were directed to the website where the sound effects page had been left intact.

Thus, while only six of the sounds effects from the website appeared in three of the videos, little can be read into this fact. In addition to their access to the sound effects being somewhat obstructed, the editing application also posed a challenge. Despite the fact that all the video clips in the kit are silent, Windows MovieMaker created a "dummy" audio track with the video clips. When added to the playback sequence, these dummy audio tracks used up one of the two audio available tracks (and could not be removed). With the voice recordings on the other track, there was often no room on either track to place sound effects and while there are workaround solutions, they are somewhat complex. Additionally, the controls for mixing the audio levels are also rather complex.

Regarding the three films that did use sound effects, the sounds were well placed in all of the videos. However, two groups neglected to adjust the audio gain (volume). In both cases, the sounds overpowered the voiceover and thus managed to make the accompanying images appear less, rather than more realistic.

#### 6.3.1.1 Sound Effect Motivations

As was mentioned above, sound effects are typically employed, especially in historical documentaries, to create a *sense* of realism—that is, they seek to persuade the viewer that something is real. Had the sounds that students used actually been recorded in the battlefields of 1917, their use might have been motivated by realism according to Nichols' frame. Instead, they were functionally motivated. It is possible that there is also a degree of intertextual motivation involved in their use, to the extent that professional programs employ sound effects in an attempt to give that impression of reality.

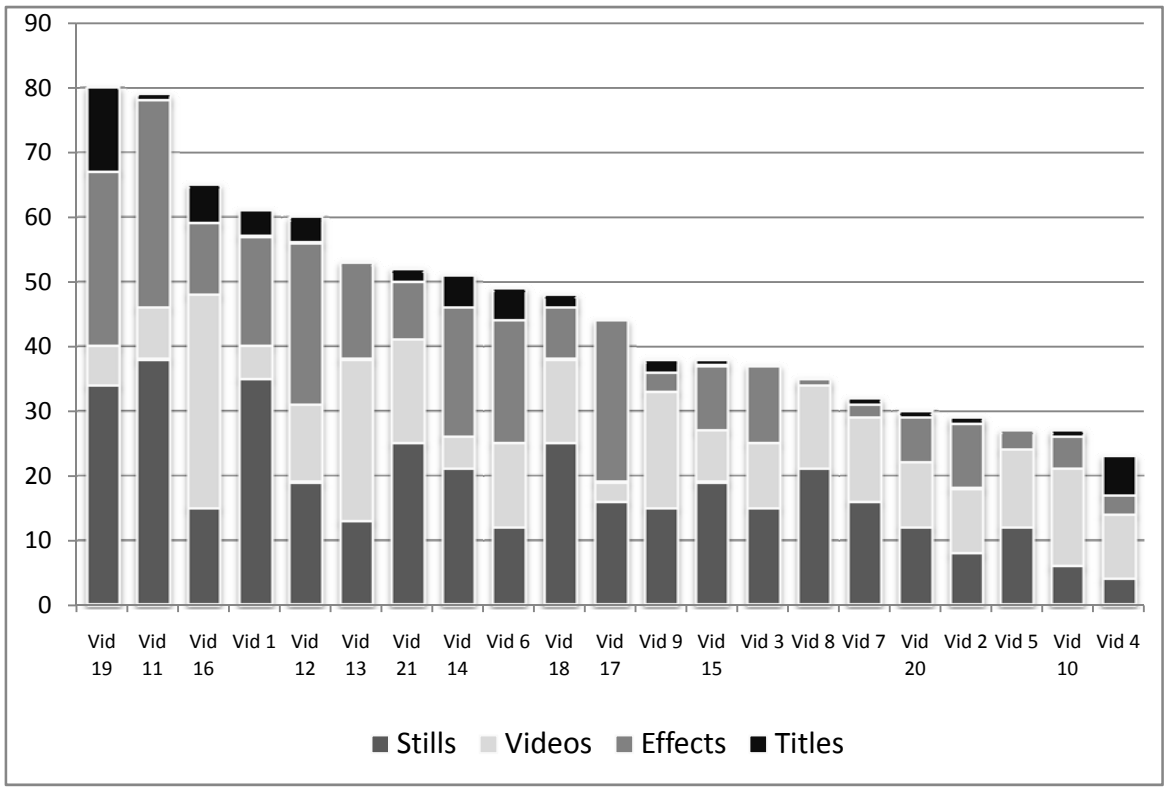
## 6.4 Visual Content

The content analysis of the visuals focused on four categories—still images, video clips, visual effects, and title cards. Figure 6-1 (overleaf) shows the overall breakdown of the student videos according to this classification.

### 6.4.1 Typographic Elements

Cards of text of one sort or another have appeared in motion pictures since the early 20$^{th}$ century, and evolved into two basic types—titles and credits. While some overlap occurs, titles tend to come at the start and sometimes in the middle of a program, they provide the title of the piece and/or other bits of information to help the viewer to understand what is going on. Credits, more often occurring at the end of a program, typically give recognition to those who are responsible for producing the motion picture. All but four of the videos examined in this study contained at least one such typographic card.

**Figure 6-2 - Occurrence of the Four Visual Elements in the Student Videos**




#### 6.4.1.1 Opening Titles

**Figure 6-1 –'Ready-made' Title. ©KIDS Report, image produced by Jason L. Used with permission. Original image in the public domain.**


Although they varied greatly in their style and complexity, twelve of the 21 videos began with some kind of visual image that contained typographic elements within it which was clearly intended to be the title card for the documentary. Half, or six, of these consisted of what might be referred to as 'ready-made' or 'found' title/image composites. Figure 6-1 is an example of this type of title card. Used

here with permission, this image was lifted from a web page on the internet and found its way into three of the student videos. Several of the other 'found' images used as opening titles are DVD covers while others were downloaded from World War I websites. (These images can be found readily by typing some variation of 'World War I' into Google.)

**Figure 6-3 - A still Image Taken From Video 14. Original video clip ©National Film Board of Canada. Reproduced with permission of the NFB.**


#### 6.4.1.2 Identification and Labelling

Five of the films used typographical overlays as a form of identification, or what Royce (2007) refers to as *labelling*—where the students lay text over top of an image in order to identify the action or label a person or thing. For example, Figure 6-3 is an instance in which students have made certain the viewer understands what is going on in the visual sequence by adding the title, "German Soldiers Surrender."

**Figure 6-4 - A Still Image Taken From Video 16. Original video clip ©National Film Board of Canada. Reproduced with permission of the NFB.**


Other titles of this variety identify a particular place or item with which the viewer might not be familiar. Figure 6-4 typifies this style of identification overlay, which is clearly intended to inform the viewer that what they are looking at is the monument that was erected atop Hill 145 along the ridge. Figure 6-5 is also an

identification title of this sort—labelling the barren and pock-marked wasteland known as “No man’s land” in a fashion that is clear, though perhaps not tonally suited to a video of this kind. The student producers themselves groaned over this image when they re-watched the film during my interview with them.

**Figure 6-5 – No Man’s Land. Original video clip ©National Film Board of Canada. Reproduced with permission of the NFB.**


#### 6.4.1.3 Intertitles

Figure 6-6 shows one of a series of intertitles that one pair of students used—very much as one might use headings in a written document—to identify the organizational structure and draw the viewer’s attention to the fact that the narrative was changing direction.

**Figure 6-6 – Conscription Crisis Intertitle.**


#### 6.4.1.4 Title Use Motivations

The titles used by the students are predominantly functional in terms of Nichols’ framework. This sort of title card harkens to the intertitles used in the silent film era to convey dialogue or clarify what was happening in a scene. Thus, whether it references the headings often found in written texts or the title cards of old black and white movies, the use of these intertitles is highly

intertextual. Though here it is likely the students were using this type of title with no knowledge of the silent film era. That titles have become conventionalized in motion picture programs, must also be factored in—especially with regard to the opening title cards and closing credits. However, it is likely that most of the titles are present in the videos because they served a very specific purpose—that of informing the viewer of certain pieces of information.

Finally, while there are formal aspects to presentation of the titles themselves such as the layout and composition of the frame, as well as the fonts and colors used—these formal elements augment the titles, but do not motivate their inclusion in the video.

### 6.4.2 Visual Effects

In the early days of motion pictures, effects were primarily accomplished "in camera" using tricks such as stop motion photography or double exposures (running the film through the camera twice to create composite images). The marriage of motion pictures with the computer processor has resulted in a tremendous revolution in what is possible in the area of visual effects. Currently, even the simplest and most scaled-down video editing applications like Windows Movie Maker™ and iMovie® come with a complement of visual effects.

#### 6.4.2.1 Transition Effects vs. Video Effects

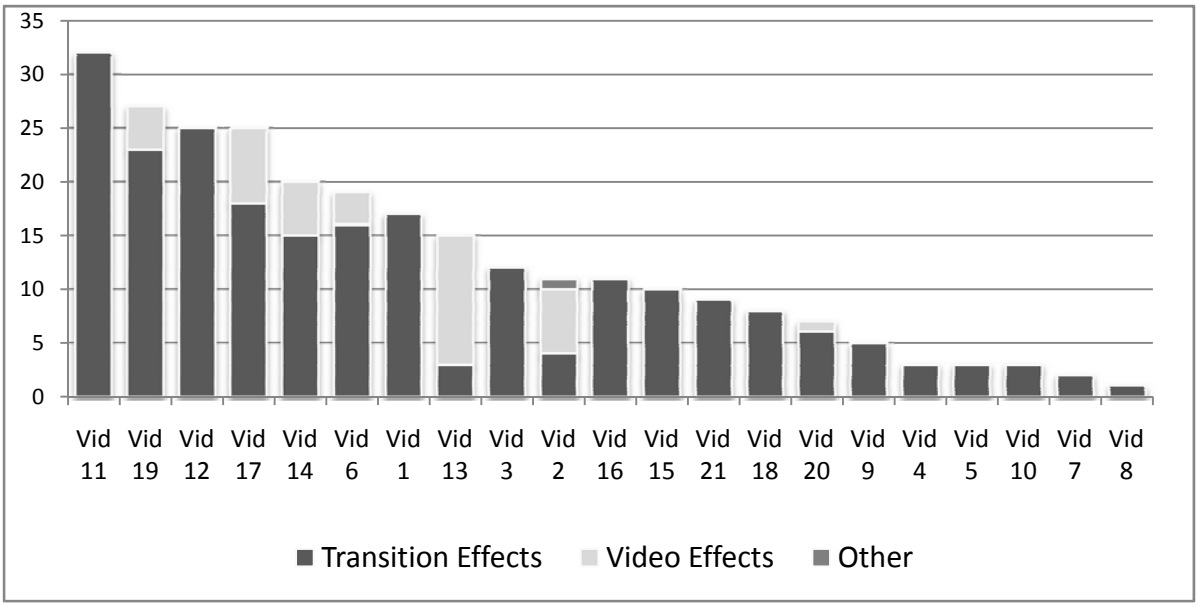
Most digital non-linear editing applications make a distinction between two main varieties of visual effects. The first are *transition effects.* As the name suggests, this type of effect takes place at the cut or transition point where one

shot ends and the next begins. Windows MovieMaker supplies sixty such effects from which to choose. The role of the transition effect in an audiovisual text is punctuative. A fade, which was the most commonly used effect in the body of student videos, may be placed at the beginning or end of a shot. Fades to or from black are the most common, but since 1960s and 1970s fades to white, red, and other solid colours have become popularized (Monaco, 2000). The fade calls attention to something either beginning or ending and typically acts to separate the two shots between which it is placed. By comparison, a dissolve (an image fading out superimposed over another fading in) suggests a connection between two images, and is rather like the cinematic version of a comma.

Rather than bridging the transition point between two shots, *video effects* are typically added to an entire shot, and often work to alter the appearance of that shot in some way. For example, one visual effect gives the image to which it is applied an “aged” appearance, with de-saturated colours and what are meant to look like scratches in the emulsion of a filmstrip that has been viewed many times. Windows MovieMaker offers twenty-eight such *video effects.*

As may be noted in Figure 6-7, all of the student videos contain at least one visual effect, and many contain far more than just one. On average, each video contains thirteen visual effects, and one video actually has more *visual effects than images*.

**Figure 6-7 - Use of Effects in the Student Videos**




Eighty-five percent of the effects used in the student programs were *transition effects*. Fourteen of the videos simply made use of one of the three traditional transition effects—fades, dissolves, and straight wipes (where one image appear to wipe another from the screen). The remaining seven, however contain at least one of the more exotic transition effects such as heart shaped or bow-tie wipes.

While all of the videos used *transition effects*, only seven included video effects. Of the 28 different video effects that are available through the software, only three[6] were used by the students in the study—*ease in*, *ease out*, and *film age*.

[6] Despite industry standards to the contrary, Windows MovieMaker offers fades to and from black and fades to and from white as selections on the video effects palette, as opposed to the transition palette where they properly belong. Thus, for the purpose of this analysis, these four effects were counted as transition effects and not video effects.

While Apple's iMovie® includes a pan and zoom effect called the "Ken Burns Effect", Windows Movie Maker allows the editor to *ease in* on an image and thus see more detail, or to *ease out*, in which case the image begins in an enlarged state and then zooms back out to the original full-sized frame.

Table 6-1 shows the occurrence of each of these three *video effects* in the student programs. Clearly, *Ease in* was the most popular of the three. The other type of *video effect* that was employed in the student videos was an aging effect that presumably was intended to take a crisp colour photo that and make it look more like the period images.

**Table 6-1 - Occurrence of Ease In/Out & Film Age Video Effects**

| Project | Video Effects | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Ease | | Film Age |
| | in | out | |
| Video 2 | 4 | 2 | |
| Video 6 | 3 | | |
| Video 13 | 7 | 3 | 2 |
| Video 14 | 2 | | 3 |
| Video 17 | 7 | | |
| Video 19 | 4 | | |
| Video 20 | 1 | | |
| Subtotal | 28 | 5 | 5 |
| Total | 33 | | 5 |

#### 6.4.2.2 Visual Effect Motivations

As they are most often used as cinematic punctuation, in terms of Nichol's framework, *transition effects* would be highly functional in their motivation. However, the use of fades has become conventionalized to the degree that professional programs typically begin with a fade in and end with a fade out. As such, intertextual motivation must also be considered. While one might argue that a number of the effects used in the student films are largely unmotivated, there are a few that are very effectively used and functionally motivated. For example, one pair of students use slow dissolve between an image of the Union Jack and the Canadian Maple Leaf flag, suggesting a slow transition from being under British rule, to achieving

independence. There are a couple of other examples that are discussed in the following chapter emerging from the in depth video analyses.

The use of the *video effects* is rather differently motivated. In the case of the *film age* effect, its use was most likely formal, for by applying an effect that makes modern photos look sepia toned and then adds scratches, one is concerned with the appearance of an image and making it tonally consistent with surrounding images. Use of the *ease in* and *ease out* effects might also be seen to be formal in nature as they affect the composition of images and direct the viewer's attention to the framing of the image. The common use of this kind of zooming effect, especially in documentaries, which involve the use of still images, suggests that the use of this effect was also intertextual in nature.

### 6.4.3 The Visual Image

The visual images examined in this portion of the content analysis consisted of still images such as photographs, clip art, and drawings, as well as dynamic images such as video clips and animations.

#### 6.4.3.1 Student-Obtained Images

Being highly familiar with the contents of the media kits, one of the first general observations I made as I watched the finished participant videos was the high number of images the students had obtained for themselves outside of the materials provided. During the design stage, Mr. Gagnon and I had realized that carving out enough class time for students to work on the project was going to be an issue. Thus, to save students from having to spend precious time trolling the

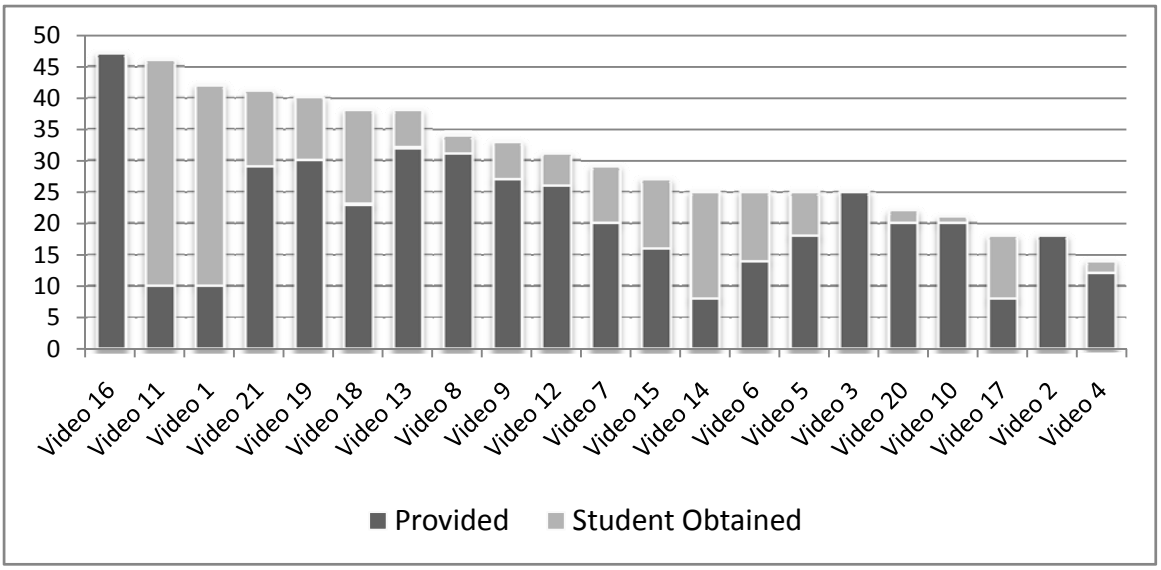
internet for imagery, we had intended for the media kit to provide students with most of the materials they would need to tell a story about the Canadians in the Battle of Vimy Ridge. We had anticipated that students might need to find a few images specific to the stories they were telling, but had not imagined anything to the degree that occurred.

As a result, one of the categories coded for in the content analysis of the student videos dealt with whether the objects used by the students in the construction of their historical documentaries had been provided to them or were obtained independently.

As can be seen in Figure 6-8, eighteen of the 21 student videos that were analyzed[7] contained at least one image that students had procured for themselves outside of the materials provided. On average, the videos contained nine such images. Strikingly, in four of the videos, the number of student-obtained images was greater than 50 percent. In two videos, it was greater than 75 percent.

[7] The copy of one student video became corrupt at about the halfway point and neither Mr. Gagnon nor the student had retained a copy. With only half of the movie watchable, I chose to omit it from all of the content analyses.

**Figure 6-8 - Proportion of Provided vs. Student Obtained Images**




#### 6.4.3.1 Correlation between Grades and Proportion of Student-Obtained Images

Using data from the 21 videos, a Pearson Bivariate Correlation—measuring the association between the grades assigned to a video and the proportion of images in that video which were student-obtained—of .436 which was calculated to have a correlation coefficient of 0.048. Based on a probability of P<=0.05, there is a statistically significant association between these two random variables. Based on this confirmed relationship between grades and the proportion of student obtained images, and the belief that an analysis of the these images might shed light on the their understanding of history, a second level of analysis was undertaken in order to characterize the student-obtained images.

#### 6.4.3.2 Characterization of Student-Obtained Images

From a news photo of Prime Minister Stephen Harper meeting with troops in Afghanistan, to an ink drawing depicting an angel of death—there is

tremendous variety in the images students acquired. There are also revealing similarities in the types of images students felt the need to search out.

While they did not always use the same precise image as their classmates, students often found and used either images of the same objects or images that shared a particular theme. As was described in the methods chapter, visual transcriptions were made describing each of the images in as much detail as possible then the images were classified according to the categories presented below.

**Visual Metonymy and Synecdoche**

In verbal communication, a metonym is a figure of speech in which one item is substituted for another with which it is closely associated—for example, one might use *Ottawa* in place of *the Canadian Government*. Synecdoche, a form of metonymy, occurs when a part or an aspect of something is used in place of the whole—for example when workers on a ranch are referred to as *hands* or *wheels* are used to refer to a car.

**Flags and Maps**

In their narratives, students often referred to a particular country or region. When adding visuals to their videos, the students then sought a visual representation to depict that country or region with a certain degree of universality. Employing a visual synecdoche, students often used an aspect of a nation—for example a flag or a map—to represent the whole.

Twenty-eight images of various flags appeared in 13 of the 21 movies (see Table 6-2). Unsurprisingly, the Maple Leaf flag was by far the most popular flag. Students would not learn until several months later the tale of how the red and white maple leaf came to be Canada's flag in 1965, including the heated political debates that surrounded the issue. Thus, it is likely that many of the students were entirely unaware that Canada had flown a different flag during WWI. Three of the student videos did contain an image of a Red Ensign with a Canadian coat of arms on it. While only one of those was the correct Red Ensign that had been the de facto Canadian flag from 1868 to 1921, it is noteworthy that these three groups made an attempt to find a flag that was historically accurate.

**Table 6-2 - Type and Occurrence of Flags**

| Flag | Occurrence |
|---|---|
| Maple leaf | 13 |
| Union Jack | 4 |
| Fleur de lis | 3 |
| Red Ensign | 3 |
| Allied flags composite | 2 |
| French | 1 |
| German | 1 |
| Racing flag | 1 |

In addition to the four maps provided for them in the media kits, students obtained thirteen maps on their own that were used in seven of the videos (see Table 6-3). Like the relatively harmless (though anachronistic) use of the Maple Leaf flag to represent the then Dominion of Canada, the maps that students selected to represent Canada were not from the World War I era, as is evidenced by the inclusion of Newfoundland as a province and Nunavut as a territory.

**Table 6-3 - Type and Occurrence of Maps**

| Map | Occurrence |
|---|---|
| Canada | 4 |
| Quebec | 2 |
| Alliances in Europe | 2 |
| Vimy | 1 |
| Europe | 1 |
| Balkans | 1 |
| Western Front | 1 |
| Afghanistan | 1 |

**Horrors of Trench Warfare**

After flags and maps, the next most common group of images that students went in search of shared a degree of horror and visceral impact. The video materials, in the media kit had been "sanitized" to a degree, in order to remove images that some might find objectionable. Nonetheless, many students felt the need to include images depicting the atrocities of war and went out of their way to do so (see Table 6-4).

**Table 6-4 - Type and Occurrence of**

| Horrific image | Occurrence |
|---|---|
| Human remains | 11 |
| Trench foot | 9 |
| Mud | 2 |
| Wasteland | 1 |
| Amputee | 1 |
| Gas victim | 1 |
| Rats | 1 |
| Lice | 1 |

Many of the images grouped together as "horrors of war", depict grisly and gruesome sights such as corpses left to rot where they had fallen in battle or the bulbous swellings on the feet of those suffering from trench foot. Others show the terrible conditions soldiers faced with stretcher-bearers up to their knees in mud as they tried to carry the wounded back to safety. What all of these images share, is a high degree of emotional intensity.

**Historical Figures**

Many students searched independently for and included images of particular figures who they felt were significant to the Battle of Vimy Ridge specifically, or more broadly, to the whole war. As anyone familiar with the Battle of Vimy Ridge might expect, Generals Byng and Currie top the list.

Others, such as the more recent Prime Ministers Jean Chretien and Stephen Harper, represent the modern Canadian government and Canada's current role in international affairs.

**Table 6-5 - Occurrence of Historical Figures**

| Figure | Occurrence |
|---|---|
| General Byng | 7 |
| General Currie | 4 |
| Archduke Ferdinand | 2 |
| 'Big Four' [a] | 2 |
| Duchess Ferdinand | 1 |
| Gen. Falkenhausen | 1 |
| PM Robert Borden | 1 |
| PM Jean Chretien | 1 |
| PM Stephen Harper | 1 |

[a] Lloyd-George, Wilson, Clemenceau, & Orlando

#### 6.4.3.3 Images of Remembrance

Given that students were told that the audience for their films was to be the Remembrance Day assembly at their school, the inclusion in so many of the videos of poppies, crosses row on row, war monuments, and cemeteries full of identical headstones is hardly surprising.

**Table 6-6 - Occurrence and Type of Images of Remembrance**

| Description | Occurrence |
|---|---|
| War memorials | 9 |
| Cemeteries/Headstones | 5 |
| Rows of Crosses | 5 |
| Poppies | 4 |
| Veterans | 3 |

#### 6.4.3.4 Image Use Motivations

Nichols' motivational framework is particularly revealing when applied to certain categories of the student-obtained images. In the case of the few video producers who took pains to find historically accurate flags and maps, their use of these items might well have been motivated by realism. Overall, the use of flags and maps is functionally motivated in the student videos. The flags represent their respective countries, and the maps do likewise, or they function to familiarize the viewer with a particular location.

The "horrific" images also serve a function within the videos—they contribute to an argument—that may be implicit or explicit—which suggests that war is full of horrific and appalling events and that it ought to be avoided.

The images of historical figures are in the case of the more modern personages, likely more symbolic or functional in their use. The images of Generals Byng and Currie and other figures from the past are likely one of the few examples of images motivated by realism from among those gathered and used by students. The inclusion of such historical figures is of course also intertextual in that such images are conventional in a historical documentary.

In terms of Nichols' motivational frame, the images of poppies, and 'crosses row on row' are clearly intertextual on the one hand, in that these items are conventions of Remembrance Day. With the students given the imagined audience of their fellow students at a school memorial observance, the conventions of Remembrance Day become fused to the conventions of the historical documentary. Intermingling with the intertextual motivation for these

images of remembrance is also the functional motivation of contributing to that general argument about the horrors of war—especially when it comes to images of crosses and headstones, making in a more reserved and clinical fashion, a similar argument to that presented by the “images of horror”.

### 6.4.4 Inappropriate Images

With frames flicking before the eye at thirty frames per second as they do with video, it is difficult to attend to details within an image that indicate where and when it might have been taken. The content analysis afforded me the opportunity to more carefully examine some of the images that students used. In addition to those categories presented above, I also identified two categories of what I have grouped together here as “inappropriate” images. These two categories are anachronistic images, and “questionable” images.

#### 6.4.4.1 Anachronistic Images

In addition to the flags and maps mentioned above, a number of the videos contained other images that were in some way anachronistic. Below I present a few examples.

**Queen Elizabeth II**

One of the student videos discussed how the success at the Battle of Vimy Ridge helped what was then the Dominion of Canada to become more independent from Britain. Part of the student argument involved reference to the British monarchy. To depict this visually, the students chose to use a recent image of a British stamp with the image of Queen Elizabeth II on it. I discovered

in my interview with the video's producers that they had been completely unaware that Queen Elizabeth II only ascended to the throne in 1952, and had indeed not yet been born at the time of First World War. Interestingly, the students maintained that even had they known, they would still have used an image of Queen Elizabeth to represent the monarchy because they felt their audience would not know nor recognize King George V and would thus not make the connection between his likeness and the British monarchy.

**African American Platoon from WWII**

Another anachronistic image, is a photograph used by a pair of students which clearly shows weaponry, uniforms, and helmets all consistent with the US General Infantry during the Second World War. It also shows a group of soldiers, all of whom are African American, taking cover behind a building, which suggests that they are engaged in street fighting of the kind characteristic in the fighting that took place in Italy towards the end of WWII. Reinforcing the notion that the image depicts fighting in Italy, the roof tiles on the buildings visible in the photo are consistent with those used throughout the Mediterranean.

**Confederate Soldiers from the American Civil War**

Another photograph that I categorized as anachronistic, shows a group of somewhat dishevelled men taking rest under the shade of a large tree. Standing, hands on hips on the ridge behind them, is an officer of the Confederate Army—wearing his distinctive gray felt hat with its tassels and crossed sabres at the front. Upon closer examination, one of the men sitting under the tree is also wearing one of the flat, cap-like Confederate Kepi hats worn by infantrymen. The

same pair of students who used the image of the American platoon, also used this image. This time however, there was no recognition on their part. When I drew their attention to the confederate uniforms they were somewhat perplexed, noting they had found the image by searching for French Canadian soldiers in WWI.

#### 6.4.4.2 "Questionable" Images

My categorization of "questionable" images was something of a catchall for images that drew my notice as being in some way out of place or inappropriate. Below are three examples.

**Uncle Sam**

One of the images I identified as "questionable" depicts a U.S. stamp with the famous image of Uncle Sam pointing his finger and a statement reading, "I want YOU for the U.S. Army". As the media kits contained a large complement of Canadian recruitment posters, and the image was not used in conjunction with a discussion of the American participation in the war, I deemed the image to be inappropriate to a documentary about Canada's participation in the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

**United Nations**

One of the films contained a thoughtful discussion of the evolution of Canada's role from peacekeeper to peacemaker that traced the nation's role in failed League of Nations and then in the United Nations (UN). While talking about the UN, the students displayed a version of the UN beneath which read:

UNITED NATIONS

PLANET EARTH – SOL SYSTEM

Perplexed at the need to designate the UN as being on planet Earth, in the so-called “Sol System”, I searched for this logo using Google and found it on a Star Trek fan website amid logos such as those of the fictional “United Federation of Planets” and “Klingon Empire”. As this extra text is large and prominent on the image, I categorized this image as being somewhat inappropriate.

**Spanish ‘Flu Victim**

Several of the videos reference the Spanish ‘Flu epidemic that occurred shortly after the war. One of the videos discusses the epidemic in some detail and its producers used a number of interesting images to accompany this discussion—including one of a poster explaining how to construct a health mask. However, one image in this sequence stood out and piqued my curiosity. A colour image that was both crisp and modern looking, it depicted a desiccated corpse, that had been wrapped in burlap and was surrounded by snow. I once again used Google to locate the picture in question. As it turned out, the image was a screen capture from the Canadian television series *ReGenesis*. The image was located on the webpage of the Ontario Genomics Institute. The image accompanied an episode summary and examination of the scientific validity of particular events in the particular episode of the show from which it was lifted. In the fictional world of the show, a new outbreak of the Spanish ‘Flu had occurred following the unearthing of a victim of the original epidemic. As the only

connection the image had to the Spanish ‘Flu was through the fictional narrative of *ReGenesis*, I consider its use inappropriate.

### 6.4.5 A Preponderance of Stills

Another surprise in the video content analyses was an unexpectedly frequent use of still over dynamic images in the construction of the videos. In quantitative terms, nineteen of the twenty-one movies contained a greater number of still images than video clips. This was unexpected, since the *Traces of the Past* media kits contained comparatively few still images: a total of 161 video clips as opposed to only 34 stills.

By observing students and answering questions while they edited, and later carefully examining the images that were used in the context of the audio commentary accompanying each, I concluded that students often chose stills over videos because they made editing for length easier. When stills are imported in to Windows MovieMaker, a clip file five seconds in length is created. Students soon learned that they could repeatedly edit the same clip to the timeline in order to quickly make a still hold longer than the five second default—thereby stretching the image to match the length of the narration it was meant to accompany.

In the interviews, I asked students what data about a video clip was the most important to them when they were making choices among the materials in the media kit. About two thirds of those who were interviewed responded that the *length of the clip* had been the most important to them. Students explained

that they had a length of time when they were discussing a certain topic and they chose the particular image they would use—from among a group of similar images—based on how well it would fill that gap in the visual track. The other third of the interviewees suggested that the description or the thumbnail image was the most important thing to them. When I asked these students about clip length, they explained that if a shot was too long they would cut it shorter and if it was not long enough they would use multiple shorter clips. It is unclear whether the students who most valued the length of the clips lacked a full understanding of the editing process and the capabilities of the application, or if they simply were looking to save time and effort.

### 6.4.6 Clip length

In documentary editing, there are no firm rules about how long an image ought to remain on screen; but in the case of static images, the general guideline is to leave an image on screen only as long as is necessary for the average viewer to fully comprehend the fundamental visual information contained within it. The average shot length in the student videos is approximately seven seconds—which falls within the parameters of what would be considered normal for a documentary video, as opposed to say a music video where the average shot length would be considerably shorter. Despite the overall average shot length being what might be described as normal, there are a considerable number of shots in the student videos where an image is held on screen for an uncomfortably long span of time.

A general “rule of thumb” taught to students at film school is that a static image should remain on screen for no less than 3 seconds and no more than 15. Twelve of the videos contain at least one still image that holds on screen for more than 15 seconds. Out of the whole corpus of videos, there are 35 shots above this length. The longest of the bunch is an image of a Canadian election poster from 1917 that remained on screen for 42.43 seconds. This particular image was used to illustrate a discussion of the conscription crisis of 1917—a topic many students found challenging to represent visually.

The length of time that shots remained on screen was a topic that came up several times in the interviews as students were asked to re-watch their documentaries in order to refresh their memories before answering questions about their editing process and the video content. When asked what they might go back and change if they could, just over half of the interviewees made comments about finding more visuals or about making some of the shots shorter.

## 6.5 Discussion

Most of the anachronistic images used are harmless and simply a result of the students either lacking contextual knowledge or being unable to visually discern between materials that are from WWI and WWII or the American Civil War due to being unfamiliar with some of the tell tale signs such as uniforms and so forth.

The following excerpt is from my interview with the students who used the African American Platoon image in their documentary:

Researcher: What about this one? Do you remember what you searched for to get this one?

Janet: It looks like World War II.

Researcher: It does, doesn't it? I think it is. It looks like an African American platoon.

Janet: It looks like Ortona, like the battle around Italy.

Researcher: Yeah it does, definitely.

When I went back to the school several weeks after the implementation was over to interview the students, they had moved forward in the socials studies 11 curriculum. Having fully covered WWII, Mr. Gagnon was covering the 1950s and the Suez Crisis with both of his classes. What is interesting about the above exchange is that it suggests that as the students progressed through the curriculum, their ability to differentiate between images from one period and another increased.

What is troubling about the use of the latter two "questionable" images described above—the UN logo and the Spanish 'Flu victim—is the apparent lack of attention paid by the students to the nature and content of the websites from which these images were plucked. Perhaps a similar lack of care and attention is contributing factor in the use of some of the anachronistic images. For example, might the Civil War photo used in one of the videos, have been embedded in text that, if read, might have informed the students about the image's proper content and context?

A subsequent interview I conducted with Jacqueline and Brenda helped make my understanding of this situation more nuanced. This dyad had used one

image in particular that had drawn my notice. The photo which clearly depicted a military funeral. Twelve soldiers stood prominently in the foreground of the image with their rifles raised about to fire a salute to honour whomever was being buried. The hats and uniforms worn by the men in the photo clearly indicate that the image is not of Canadian soldiers. It is unclear, however, if they image is from the First World War era or perhaps from the Second Boer War as slouch hats worn by the men in the photo are consistent with those worn by British soldiers in their African campaigns. However, these hats might just as easily have been those worn by the Australians and New Zealanders in WWI. Unsure about the origins about the image, I hoped to learn more it about from the students. The following excerpt from my interview with editing partners Jacqueline and Brenda starts with a discussion of another image, which is rather revealing as the interview is drawn into a discussion of the image in question:

Researcher: This is an interesting one. It's another sort of one where everyone is waving their hats and so forth. I haven't come across it on the internet. Do you remember where you found it or what you would have searched for it?

Jacqueline: No idea. Oh! I searched like a million times, "Canadian troops". "Canadian troops" like a million times.

Brenda: I remember. It was on Google, that's where we found it.

Jacqueline: I can't remember.

Brenda: Or I thought it was on the site?

Jacqueline: I'm pretty sure it wasn't from the right war, but…

Brenda: I remember finding that on the computer.

Researcher: Okay, you don't think it's from the First World War?

Jacqueline: I can't remember. One of our pictures was from the wrong war.

Researcher: Okay. Well, the helmets look right. It looks right.

Jacqueline: I just know that one of our pictures wasn't.

Researcher: I wonder if the one that is not from the right war might be that one [clicking on military funeral image depicting the 12-gun salute.]

Jacqueline: Probably yeah. That's the one. We just looked for "funeral".

Brenda: Wasn't that one on the website? 'Cause we were like "oh we need a funeral." Wasn't that on the website? [Referring to the *Traces of the Past* Media Kit].

Researcher: This one's not on the website. I would say that it might be the Boer War. It's definitely not Canadian. It's possibly Australians or New Zealanders.

Jacqueline: Maybe. We just wanted a funeral in general.

Researcher: So you were mostly….

Jacqueline: We wanted the idea, 'cause the little details like--. You can see this is a funeral, right, like kind of a…just…ceremony. That kind of thing. With the importance of the rite, and that kind of thing.

Researcher: So, for you, the priority was the symbolic idea of a funeral rather than the specific details?

Jacqueline and Brenda together: Yeah.

Until this interview with Jacqueline and Brenda, I had been assuming that the student use of anachronistic images had only to do with students' understandable lack of contextual knowledge. In this interview, however, I

learned that these students were unconcerned about using an image that was from the wrong war as its more generalized depiction of a military funeral was of greater importance to them than was the specific content and context of the image itself.

This incident draws attention to a dualistic tension that exits in the meaning and use of images. Whether one juxtaposes literal versus figurative, denotative versus connotative, or specific versus general—images often have two meanings. Plantinga (1997), a documentary film theorist, draws attention to this distinction calling one an image's *physical* meaning, the other its *nominal* meaning:

> Within its syntactical context, an image physically depicts a dog if it represents a particular dog – a Boxer named Bubba, for example. Yet even that same shot can alternatively, in another context, nominally depict a class – Boxers, or dogs in general, or dogs that run fast. Such a shot is still of a particular dog, but it is used as a nominal rather than a physical depiction (p. 156).

In the example above, the students were concerned with the nominal depiction of the image—that of a funeral. By contrast, when I examined their video and took note of the image, I was addressing what it physically depicted.

As will be seen in the following chapter, especially in the excerpts from my interviews with the video producers, it would seem that the students were often concerned with the nominal depictions of images at the cost of their physical meanings.

The discipline of history is most often interested in the physical depiction of images over the nominal. Documentary moviemaking tends to position

images as illustrations of the verbal contents of the narrative. As illustrations, it is most often the nominal depictions of images that are highlighted. Thus, what has come to light here is that there are natural tensions that exist between documentary moviemaking and the discipline of history. While this by no means suggests that moviemaking and history are wholly incompatible, it does draw attention to these tensions that exist between the two, and has very real implications when having students create historical documentaries.

# 7: IN DEPTH VIDEO ANALYSES

The analyses presented in the previous chapter assessed the overall contents of the student videos, characterizing the constituent pieces from which the videos were constructed. This chapter, by carefully examining a small sample of the videos, seeks to understand how the producers of three of the videos constructed their historical documentaries from those constituent pieces. The broad question driving this analysis sought to reveal what might be learned about how the students used the medium, and the materials they selected, to communicate their historical narratives.

While a structural semiotic analysis might seek to answer *what* a particular text means, a social semiotic analysis, by contrast, seeks to understand *how it means* what it means. Because not every image used in the sampled videos is useful in shedding light on the way students were thinking historically, I have chosen to highlight particular images or sequences from my analysis that I feel are likely to reveal something relevant to the way the students were thinking about history.

This method of textual analysis—often referred to as a "close reading" of a film—is highly interpretive. The benefit of this style of analysis is that it generates what Geertz (1973) called "thick descriptions" through a complex, textured examination of a small number of texts. My own skills and experience both as a film and video editor and as someone who taught documentary video editing for

a nearly a decade, allow me to draw attention to elements of the videos that the average viewer might not notice. When such materials are available and useful, I draw on my interviews with the students to support my interpretations.

## 7.1 Editing or Montage

The work of piecing together a motion picture from all the available components is a process that has a number of different names associated with it. In English-speaking North America it is referred to as “editing” or “cutting” a show. In Europe it is more often called “montage”. Monaco (2000) makes note of the different connotations these words have and suggests that they engender different attitudes towards the practice. Editing is perceived as a process of reduction wherein that which is not needed is eliminated. Montage, conversely, is viewed as an additive process through which a text is constructed. I prefer “cutting” over editing as I view it as something of a synthesis of the other two—being that one is able to cut something in or out of a sequence. However, in this chapter I often use “cutting” and “editing” interchangeably to mean the process of making decisions about the contents of a sequence—including both adding materials and removing them.

In the in depth analyses to follow, I once again draw heavily on the work of Nichols (1991) who identifies two different styles of documentary editing that often prove useful in looking at how the students chose to construct their videos. The first style is that of *evidentiary editing* which Nichols defines as, “…cutting to bring together the best possible evidence in support of a point” (p. 17). He contrasts this with m*atch action* editing, which he notes less common in the

documentary genre than evidentiary editing. Nichols defines *match action* as a style of editing reminiscent of continuity[8] editing in a dramatic program. However, in a documentary, this style of editing follows the action or movement of an idea or process as opposed to a character. For example, a documentary may show the processes involved in glass blowing. In constructing a glass blowing sequence an editor may combine elements of the process recorded at different times, in different locations, and even involving different glass artists into a single sequence. Amid all the spatial, temporal, and 'actor' discontinuity, so long as the logic of the process involved in glass blowing is rendered clearly, then the match action edit is successful.

There is another aspect of documentary editing that may be drawn from my glass blowing example. Plantinga (1997), another documentary film theorist, put it thusly:

> For the most part, nonfiction films are more free-ranging in their use of space and time than classical fiction films. Spaces are often numerous, fleeting, and not as carefully constructed. Where the fiction film often limits a scene or sequence to a single space, the nonfiction film 'bounces' around the globe, using whatever images are needed to construct the thread of its linear progression (1997, p. 151).

Cutting in the documentary genre often defies what many may think of as cinematic "realism". This is done in order to render a true representation of a process or a logic, which is seen as more important than maintaining a diegetic space—or the space that exists in the world of the film. In my glass blowing

[8] Continuity editing (the dominant style of cutting in dramatic programs) is so called because cuts are motivated by maintaining a sense of temporal and/or spatial continuity often achieved by cutting from one angle or shot to another in the middle of an action such as someone standing or sitting, which disguises the cut.

example, there is no implication that what the viewer sees happened at one time or in one place. What *is* implied is that the process itself has been rendered realistically. I highlight this aspect of documentary editing because I will come to draw upon it the discussion, for I believe it to be a source of tension between the discipline of history and the medium of cinema—and more particularly, the documentary genre.

## 7.2 Three In Depth Video Analyses

Two of the videos I analyzed in depth—those of Sharon and Danielle—are polar opposites in many ways. Sharon only used materials from the media kits, whereas the vast majority of Danielle's images were ones she procured on her own. Danielle predominantly used still images; Sharon used preferred motion clips. The editing styles employed by these two students are also radically different—Danielle maintained a very tight link between the visual and aural content and employed *evidentiary editing only.* Sharon had a much more casual style with her evidentiary editing, and used match action editing to compose a detailed and complex *match action* battle sequence. On both of these counts, the type of images used and the nature of the editing, James and Allan's video sits midpoint between the other two.

"A film is difficult to explain because it is easy to understand" (Metz, 1991 p. 69). Anyone who has ever tried to describe film to someone will know that there is truth in what Metz suggested. I begin each of the analyses by introducing the student producers through information gathered in the surveys or in my interviews and then I provide a structural examination of the videos. In the

discussion that follows, I contrast aspects of the videos in order to extract from my analyses what is revealed about the medium of video as a means of for students to express their historical understanding.

### 7.2.1 Sharon's Video

A student in Mr. Gagnon's social studies 11 enriched class, Sharon indicated on the pre-survey that she had no previous video editing experience. In my interview with her, I learned Sharon had done some graphic design and yearbook work. Like nine of her peers, Sharon ranked social studies as the third most important subject for students to learn after the sciences and mathematics. In a pair of questions on the pre survey asking students "What is the best thing about social studies?" Followed by "What is the worst thing about social studies?" Sharon had the following to say:

> *Best*: Learning about larger worldly events that helped greatly shape how my life is now.
>
> *Worst*: DATES & NAMES! Learning about little details that I don't feel is (sic) necessary or doesn't help add to interesting topics (for ex. I don't need to know all the names of past cabinets of Can gov't).

On the post survey, in response to a question about whether she felt moviemaking was a good way to express what she had learned in social studies, Sharon responded:

> I think moviemaking helps us put together what we learn in SS [social studies] visually. We can actually picture what is going on at that time.

Furthermore, she felt the best thing about the video project involved:

> Being able to present the story + significance visually and speech (sic) - not by writing. I enjoyed editing the video exactly to my liking.

At nine seconds shy of five minutes, Sharon's video is among the longer ones examined. All of the forty-seven images used in Sharon's video, thirty-three of which were video clips, were taken from the *Traces of the Past* media kit. As so few students in the study worked exclusively with the materials that had been provided for the project, I asked Sharon in my interview with her about whether or not she had looked for other materials:

Researcher: You didn't use any material outside of what was in here [indicates media kit]. Some students chose to go and get their own images and bunch of different things. Did you consider it? Was it an option you looked at?

Sharon: Well, it was kind of hard to get real photos from the war. So I thought this was a good source already. And then putting music in, there was music right here from the war and putting in a modern song didn't really—didn't seem the thing to do. But some people did. (Laughs.) Their choice.

Researcher: So you didn't find at any point that there was--there was something you were trying to say and you didn't have a visual to represent it?

Sharon: Yeah, there was enough material there.

#### 7.2.1.1 Sharon's Video structure

Sharon's is one of only a few of the student videos with fully realized opening and closing sequences—opening with a simple *montage sequence*[9] that serves to set a mood for that which is to follow. The tone of the opening is

[9] *Montage*, the French word for editing, is a term that can be employed in different ways in film theory and discourse. When paired with *sequence*, however, it refers to a sequence of shots, typically accompanied by music, in which there is no plot, or narrative content being expressed.

primarily achieved through the musical selection—the period piece, “Keep the Home Fires Burning” (Novello, 1914) which was among the materials provided in the kit.

> Keep the Home-fires burning, while your hearts are yearning,
> Though your lads are far away they dream of home.
> There's a silver lining, through the dark cloud shining;
> Turn the dark cloud inside out, till the boys come home.

The burr of John McCormack’s voice singing these sentimental lyrics in a slightly hollow and tinny recording that crackles and hisses, quickly establishes a wistful, nostalgic tone for the video. When asked in interview about the opening sequence and her choice of this music, Sharon had the following to say:

> Sharon: I remember singing this song in elementary and I like the song. And then I thought it was a good opening, ‘cause I kinda like, I don’t know, like the whole thing.

The visual track of Sharon’s eighteen-second *montage sequence* consists of a series of eight still images. The selection of the images themselves appears to be rather random as there is nothing in the form, content, or theme that appears to connect one image to the next. With no narrative content driving the placement of cuts, an editor might use implied movement or directionality within the shot or the rhythm of the music to motivate cutting. Sharon instead chose to cut each of the images according to a preset length of time—the first seven images remains on screen for exactly two seconds each. The final photo, showing a young man sitting in his long johns on a large building block amid the rubble of what once was a building, with a pen clutched in his hand, writing what

one might suppose is a letter home to loved ones, holds for twice as long as the others.

#### 7.2.1.2 Video Narrative

The main body of Sharon's video can be divided into three parts. The first section, an introduction, is easy to identify as it is clearly set apart from the rest by a pause in the flow of the narrative, which occurs simultaneously in the video and audio tracks. It is considerably more difficult to place a line between the two segments which follow, for while a clear break occurs in the audio track between Sharon's account of the battle and the section which assesses its significance, there is no accompanying break in the visual materials. Further complicating things, a complex visual sequence spans the audio break and continues as the narrative moves from retelling the story of the battle into Sharon's analysis. As the voiceover and the logic of the argument it presents are the backbone of the documentary, the audio break was used as a demarcation point despite the fact that the visual sequence spans it.

#### 7.2.1.3 Introduction

The narrative portion of Sharon's video begins:

> 1914 to 1918. World War I. It was said to be the war to end all wars, and to the brave Canadians who went to fight for Britain, it was their hopes for finding adventure and relief from unemployment at home….

Lasting twenty-eight seconds and composed of six video clips, the introduction provides background information on the war itself and how Canada came to be

involved. The images which accompany Sharon's narrative are all video clips depicting various scenes of men engaging in trench warfare. None of these images directly connects to the content of the voiceover; however the clips have been cut into an engaging sequence.

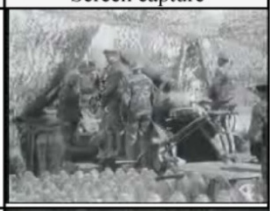
#### 7.2.1.4 Account of the Battle

The following line of narration signals the transition from introduction to Sharon's account of the battle:

> There was one battle within World War I which some experts say may have influenced the war so greatly that it ended two years before it was predicted to finish….

Aside from one title overlay, which reads, "The Battle of Vimy Ridge: WWI", and two maps detailing the Vimy environs, this section of the documentary is constructed solely from video clips. While the early part of the section is characterized by *evidentiary editing* with the visuals being used to illustrate the ideas presented in the narrative, part way through the section, Sharon's editing style changes. As Sharon's account of the battle becomes more elaborate, she begins to employ a match action editing style wherein she constructs a complex visual sequence, which, while it relates to and complements the contents of the voiceover, is also rather independent from it. Spanning fifteen video clips with a running time of one minute and thirty-seven seconds, Sharon's match action battle sequence is easily the most complex and nuanced of the lot. Figure 7-1 contains a compilation of still images extracted from the video clips Sharon used in the elaboration of her battle sequence.

**Figure 7-1 - The Match Action Sequence in Sharon's Video. Original video clips ©National Film Board of Canada. Reproduced with permission of the NFB.**

| Event | Description | Screen capture | Event | Description | Screen capture |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A division of Canadian soldiers march in formation along a dirt road. |  | 2 | A camouflaged artillery battery fires a shell. |  |
| 3 | A group of Canadian soldiers begin moving out of trenches and slowly advancing. |  | 4 | A series of shells explode in the distance sending up clouds of dirt and smoke. |  |
| 5 | From within a fortified trench soldiers can be seen advancing towards a line of barbed wire. |  | 6 | Shot in profile, a highland division advances across no man's land. |  |
| 7 | Crouched low, another group of men make their way through an opening in a barbed wire fence. |  | 8 | More men move forward out of trenches and begin to advance. |  |
| 9 | Several German soldiers in a trench take cover as an artillery shell goes off right next to the trench.* |  | 10 | Rifles at the ready, a group of Canadian soldiers jump into the German trench that had just been taking fire.* |  |
| 11 | A group German soldiers raise their arms up in surrender* |  | 12 | A line of German POWs are counted as they march into an encampment. |  |
| 13 | In a trench, several German prisoners surrender their papers and tags to two Canadian officers. |  | 14 | A doctor crouches next to a soldier, removing a field dressing that is wrapped around his head. |  |
| 15 | One soldier carries another on his back piggy back style while a third escorts two prisoners. |  | | *These images are likely staged. | |

#### 7.2.1.5 Analysis of Significance

Running one minute and fifty-five seconds, the analysis section is the longest in Sharon's video. This section begins:

> Known as a Canadian milestone, the Canadian corps had taken more prisoners, artillery, and had gained more ground than any British offensive in the entire war….

The *match action* sequence, wraps up about twenty-five seconds in to this section, at which point, the program returns to a casual evidentiary editing style. Sharon's manner of editing might be referred to as *casual* because of the way the visuals stand with respect to the narrative. In some of the videos the relationship between the visual and verbal modes is characterized by mimesis—where the visuals attempt to directly translate the contents of the verbal narrative. Sharon's video is marked by points of mimesis throughout each section of the video, but between those points the narrative might go in one direction while the visuals develop into small sequences that complement but do not necessarily echo the content. For example, while the narrative speaks of Canadians taking great pride in the victory at Vimy Ridge, the accompanying visual shows a bunch of rather disheveled men passing along mugs of something hot, along with a tin of some kind of baked item.

Sharon's narrative ends with the following line:

> The New York Tribune said that Canada had fielded a better army than Napoleon. Canada took great pride in their success in the battle of Vimy

> Ridge and in simpler terms, historian Pierre Berton once said, ‘They said it couldn't be done and we did it.’

The visual accompaniment to the above narrative is a well known still image taken in early May of 1917 depicting three truck loads of victorious Canadians soldiers shown with their arms held high waving their helmets jubilantly. Layered over this image is the text: “and we did it…” which echoes the end of the Berton quote in the voiceover.

#### 7.2.1.6 Credit Sequence

After the body of the video fades out, the program closes with a quick rolling credit sequence that plays over the final verse of “Keep the Home Fires Burning”. In the rolling title, Sharon includes her name, section, student ID number, and the name of the course. Beyond a simple credit with her name, none of this other information was required. Sharon was perhaps attempting to extend the length of the credit roll in order to play more of the song at the end. Eventually the rolling title ends and the song then finishes over a black screen.

### 7.2.2 James and Allan

Both students in Mr. Gagnon’s mainstream class, James and Allan both indicated English was not their first language. While Allan ranked social studies as the least important subject for students to know, James ranked it second, but having given two first place and two second place rankings, he also placed sciences second. At the time they filled out the pre survey, neither student was sure what they wanted to do after high school.

In response to a question on the pre-survey which asked him what he thought was the best thing about Social Studies, James responded, “It does not require math. Just thinking.” Regarding the worst thing about Social Studies he noted, “Too much thinking.”

When asked in the post survey what he hoped other students might learn from watching his video at the Remembrance Day assembly (should it be screened), Allan responded, “I hope that they would learn the importance of the role of the Canadians in WWI. I also want them to appreciate the hard work that went into putting the video together.” In response to a question that asked if the students thought moviemaking was a good way to express what they had learned in social studies about Canada’s role in World War I, James wrote, “Yes, because you can put your own thoughts into the project more creatively than you could in an essay.”

In response to a question about the best thing about working on the video project, Allan wrote, “Viewing the old movie clips of WWI.” While James indicated he thought, “Playing around with video effects and graphics” was the best. As for the worst thing about the project, they both indicated that it was the amount of effort or work the project had entailed.

At two minutes and fifty one seconds, James and Allan’s video was among the shortest of videos from across the two classes. Focusing primarily on the military significance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, the boys’ video is composed of twenty-five images. Of that sum, the James and Allan obtained eleven on their

own. The split between the use of video clips and stills was about evenly matched, with thirteen videos and twelve stills.

#### 7.2.2.1 Opening

James and Allan chose to begin their video with something that has become, since the days of Orson Welles' "Citizen Kane", something of a cinematic trope. Simply titled 'WWI', the boys' video begins with an animated title. This title is created from a template which allows the editor to insert an image of his or her choice as well as a line of text. The program then arranges these to look like the headlines and a main photo on the front page of a newspaper. When played, the newspaper effect spins clockwise into frame as though coming from a distance. After holding its position for several seconds, the photograph then zooms out to engulf the frame. It makes an interesting opening, as it acts to draws the viewer into the image.

Beneath this opening visual, the audio track consists of a jaunty piece of music played on the bagpipes which was selected from the music that had been provided in the media kit.

#### 7.2.2.2 Account of the Battle

The main body of James and Allan's documentary begins with the following line of narration:

> In the summer of 1914, Germany had amassed a sizeable army, and, with the death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, World War I had started. Canadians were called to join the cause of the Allies to stop the Germans in the war….

The first image, the one which zooms out from the newspaper effect, is an example of the style of visuals referred to above as 'ready-made' title cards. The image James and Allan obtained is a composite two photographs, one superimposed over another, with an upper typographic layer reading, "World War I". The lower image depicts a group of men in profile walking along a path of planks on what is unmistakably the muddy and churned up earth of the Western Front. The men, seen at a distance and in silhouette, are wearing the distinctive Brodie helmets worn by soldiers of the British Empire and thus could easily be Canadian, British, ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps), or even American forces[10]. The second image, layered over top of the first, clearly depicts a desert scene with a man atop a camel out in front of a long line of other uniformed men also riding camels. Given the merging of an image of men on the Western Front with an image that is clearly from the Middle Eastern theatre of the war, it is likely the image depicts ANZAC soldiers—especially in light of the slouch-brimmed hats the men appear to be wearing.

Like Sharon's video, James and Allan's documentary was also among the eight that included a *match action* battle sequence. Running fifty-one seconds and consisting of six video clips, it is much shorter and considerably less elaborate than the one Sharon constructed, but it convenys the same battle logic wherein Canadian forces advance and German forces ultimately surrender. Whereas Sharon had ended her match action scene with POWs and a medic,

[10] The Americans in WWI also wore helmets from the Brodie pattern ("Brodie Helmet", 2008).

James and Allan finish their sequence with a shot that pans across a slew of wooden crosses in a rather disorderly mass planted in wet and mucky ground.

#### 7.2.2.3 Analysis of Significance

James and Allan's commentary of the significance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge was limited, the follow lines from the narration encompass their entire analysis:

> To this day, there stands a monument for the costly victory won by Canadians. With this victory, Canada was recognized as an independent nation capable of making their own decision. In the end, around 55,000 Canadians were killed when the war ended. But for their efforts, they managed to do what no other army before them had achieved.

In addition to the brevity of their examination of the historical significance of the battle, the visual composition which accompanies it is also noteworthy. It is constructed from five still images, all of which the students obtained on their own. Several are rather interesting selections which I asked the boys about in interview to discuss their reasons for selecting and using these particular images[11]. Because we did not talk about these images in order in the interview, I present them slightly out of their sequential order in the video.

**Image 1**

The section opens with a modern, color image of the Vimy Monument rotating into frame. The following excerpt from my interview with James and Allan addresses the selection and inclusion of this image:

[11] As these images were drawn from unknown internet sources, I do not have permission to include them here.

Researcher: Why do you think the Vimy Memorial is significant to show?

James: Like it's--. I mean people don't even know about Vimy Ridge these days. So, I just thought that—that some people really do remember.

Researcher: Right.

James: And like what they actually did there. And there's proof of what they did and not just patriotism talking.

Researcher: OK. And colour. There was one [an image of the Vimy Memorial] in the materials that was black and white. Did you choose this one specifically for the fact that it was colour?

James: Yeah. We didn't like the—.

Allan: (at the same time) Yeah. It looked better after all that black and white.

James: And this one's like a better angle and stuff like that.

**Image 2**

The second image, which I had classified in the content analysis as a "questionable" image, depicts a closely packed crowd gathered around a large building, perhaps a store, in front of which a sleigh or horse drawn wagon sits. On the overhang, jutting out above the door of the building, stands a Christmas scene with a decorated evergreen and some small figures that are perhaps Santa's elves. James did not even allow me to articulate a question about this one before jumping into an explanation of its use in their video:

Researcher: OK. This photo--.

James: Well, see, we were slightly off, but we didn't have that much time so we just continued to work with it. This was just to show that--. I know if you look closely it looks like something out of Christmas. Which it is. But we just wanted to show people like celebrating and being happy.

Researcher: OK. So would it be fair to say that the actual contents of the image weren't as important to you as the symbolic meaning?

Allan: Yeah, just for someone to put their mind on the crowd--.

James: Like, oh hey--.

Researcher: So, it was to represent celebration at the end of the war?

Allan: Yeah.

That James cut me off before I could even articulate a question would seem to indicate that he was a bit defensive about using it and wanted to interject a disclaimer regarding why it had been used. It is noteworthy that they used it despite its clear Christmas elements for the more general depiction of "celebration".

**Image 4**

The fourth image in this section is a very powerful photograph in black and white showing a cross staked into freshly churned earth with another just behind it. The wooden crosses are shot from a very low angle which sets them against a tempestuous sky with swirling clouds through which streams of sunlight emerge. Atop the cross, in the foreground, hangs a dented soldier's helmet. It is the rounded style of helmets worn by the American ground infantry in WWII. In

interview, James and Allan appeared unaware of the anachronism of this image, but strongly aware of its symbolic and rhetorical effect:

Researcher: What about this image captured your interest? What do you like about it?

James: I thought it was just a really good picture. Like if you just see a cross--you see a cross. With a helmet on top of it, you know that underneath there….

Allan: We wanted them to have respect.

**Images 3 and 5**

The third image James and Allan chose to include in this section is a modern color photograph depicting several rows of white headstones all carved with maple leaves and crosses; the names are unreadable. The fifth and final image in this section depicts a carved granite headstone which reads:

FRED
BRINLEY
1895 – 1931
WWI

Researcher: Do you know Fred Brinley?

James: No. We just wanted to make it like more personal because all the other ones are just crosses, right?

Allan: Well, what I really wanted was to have…was a lot of graves with peoples' names on them.

James: Yeah.

Researcher: So, what was the significance of having the names?

Allan: This many people died and they had families and...to show the dates--.

James: And they're actually people and there not just... soldiers who just died.

Researcher: OK.

James: And they died early.

Using Nichol's motivational forms, there is a tension here in the way the boys refer to these two images between the motivations of realism and functionalism. On the surface realism would appear to be the motivating factor, but Allan's statement about wanting to make it more personal, but James' last statement about the soldiers dying early, gave me the sense that these students want to persuade their viewers to feel some connection with these dead soldiers. It is also noteworthy that the image used shows Fred Brinley as having died in 1931, well after the war had ended. This fact underscores that what is created by the use of these images is a *sense* of realism. Thus, I would argue that Allan and James are putting forward an implicit argument, which suggests that WWI was a horrible event that mowed men down in the prime of life.

#### 7.2.2.4 Closing Sequence

The final sequence in James and Allan's video runs for just over thirty seconds and simply consists of a static image under which can be heard a bugler playing "Taps". The static photograph shows a military cemetery in the golden light of either sunrise or sunset. The popular fourth stanza of the English poet Lauren Binyon's "For the Fallen" (1914) is prominently printed on the top left hand corner of the image reading:

> They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
> Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.

The following interview excerpt would seem to indicate that James and Allan were once again keenly aware of the rhetorical effect of the selections they were making, but unconcerned to know either the identity or the historical context of the music and poetry with which they chose to end their film.

Researcher: So, "Taps" and what is this up in the corner here [indicating the poetry in upper left corner]? Where did that come from?

James: Well, we were looking for--. We just Googled 'graves' and 'World War One' and we came up with this and we thought, "Oh, that's a good picture". At first, we just fell for the picture. We clicked on it and enlarged it, we read the thing, and like "Whoa, that's pretty good."

Researcher: OK and then the music that's at the end here?

Allan: We got that from the website.

Researcher: And you chose it because…

Allan: It's sad.

James: Like a salute kind of.

Researcher: Do you know what the music is specifically?

James: No idea. It just sounded like something sad.

### 7.2.3 Danielle's Documentary

Danielle is a strong student in Mr. Gagnon's mainstream grade 11 social studies class who aspires to be a dentist after high school. In the pre-survey, Danielle ranked Socials Studies as the least important subject as compared to

English, Sciences, and Math. She indicated that the best thing about Social Studies was “learning about Canadian triumphs” and the worst thing was that it can often get boring.

To the following survey question, “Do you think moviemaking is a good way to express what you have learned in social studies about Canada’s role in World War I?” Danielle’s response was somewhat ambivalent: “Yes and NO. You can express it in any way and have similar affects (sic), but it was nice to see the completed work”.

Despite having been challenged during the video editing process by repeated computer crashes resulting in loss of work, Danielle nonetheless said of the software and editing process, “I guess it was pretty simple. It’s not like rocket science or anything.”

Danielle’s video is three minutes, forty-two seconds in length and is comprised of 42 images and 4 titles. As was mentioned previously, one of the outstanding aspects of Danielle’s video lies in the fact that only 24% or 10 of the 42 images that Danielle used in her video were taken from the Traces of the Past media kit, the 32 remaining images were acquired independently.

While one of the thirty-two images Danielle found has a copyright issue, her video does not contain images that might be characterized as anachronistic or historically questionable, but Danielle does make some interesting image selections as will be seen below.

#### 7.2.3.1 Opening and Closing Bookends

Danielle's opening and closing sequences are one of the most striking features of the program. Both of the other videos analyzed here have also had some form of framing device existing outside the main narrative of the video in order to set the tone and ease the viewer into the narrative. There was nothing that tied the opening and closing together in James and Allan's video, but in Sharon's video both sequences shared a piece of music. Danielle's closing sequence truly mirrors the opening and together these two sequences form what is often referred to in film and literary discourse as a pair of *bookends*. Typical of this type of framing device, the opening and closing are clearly a pair—various stylistic and structural elements of these sequences mirror and complement the other in ways that the opening and closing elements of the other videos do not.

In this case, part of the bookend symmetry that sets the opening and closing sequences apart from the body of the film comes from the fact that the narration in each of these short sequences is not voiced by the student herself, as is the rest of the film, but is instead read by Mr. Gagnon who lends his voice to read a pair of quotations—one for each of the bookends.

The opening sequence is built around a quotation by renowned academic historian Desmond Morton. The sequence begins as a simple title card reading: "Dedicated to the soldiers of Vimy Ridge" fades in and holds for several seconds. At about the same time, the viewer hears Mr. Gagnon deliver the line: "Doing great things together is how nations are formed." At that point another piece of title text appears, layered over the first, reading: "The beginning." Both titles then

fade out as Mr. Gagnon continues, “Vimy was such a moment.” Beneath the whole opening plays a wistful piece of piano music.

A later portion of that same piece of music plays beneath the concluding moments of the main sequence and all through the closing sequence. The latter half of the bookend mirrors more than just the music of the opening. The closing also centers on a quote by another famous Canadian historian which is once again read by Mr. Gagnon. The style and layout of the typographic elements also precisely matches that of the opening. The quote used in the closing was penned by popular historian Pierre Berton. Beginning with a beautiful photograph of soldiers shown in silhouette walking on a ridge, Mr. Gagnon’s voice cuts in, “They said it couldn’t be done….” Title text slowly fades in over the image of the soldiers on the ridge reading, “Remember those who fought.” Then the voiceover continues, “And we did it.” Finally, the picture and text fade out to be replaced by a simple title reading, “The End.”

It should be noted, that without the cue of the quotation marks and a citation attributing the words to someone, the fact that Mr. Gagnon is reading quotations attributed to prominent Canadian historians could very well be lost on the average viewer. Rhetorically speaking, having Mr. Gagnon lend his voice to the two shorter sequences is very striking and reminiscent of the kind of “voice of god” narration that this type of documentary is best known for. Thus while the appeal to authority that such epigraph-like quotations might lend in a textual form is lost when they are merely spoken aloud without attribution, there is a different appeal to authority that comes from having not just a different voice reading the

opening and closing, but that of an adult male voice with a deeper timbre and poetic delivery.

An expository documentary is very much about rhetoric; it's about presenting a convincing argument about the historic world and the construction of the video itself is about structuring and presenting that argument. Elements of style within this video would seem to point to awareness, on the part of the student, of certain rhetorical devices—although not necessarily cinematic devices.

#### 7.2.3.2 Title

After the opening bookend, almost seeming to bridge between that opening and the body of the video, Danielle inserts a "ready-made" title—one that appears in three of the videos. Nearer to the time of the implementation, it was one of the uppermost "hits" on Google Images using "Battle of Vimy Ridge" as a search keyword. When I pointed out to Danielle that the image was a DVD cover, she responded. "Oh, I never noticed. The DVD sign."

#### 7.2.3.3 Account of the Battle

Without any introduction to the war or any other preamble, Danielle's documentary begins with her detailed account of the battle. In a segment of the video running one minute and thirty-eight seconds, Danielle narrative begins:

> Late in the year of 1916, the four divisions of Canadian Corps was assembled together for the first time. Then under the expertise of Julian Byng and Arthur Currie, the army had one goal in mind—to seize the

> heavily guarded area of land in northern France known as Vimy Ridge-the area that the Germans acquired in 1914.

Of the eighteen images used in this section, eleven are ones Danielle obtained independently. For the most part, the content and length of a shot matches that which is being discussed in the voiceover. When discussing that the British and French had previously attempted to retake the ridge and failed, Danielle cuts to a clip art images of the Union Jack and the French flag. Then when talking about the German defenses she slowly dissolved from a German flag (the correct Jack in black, white and red with an iron cross on the front) to group of German soldiers marching. The sound of cheering appears at this point, but as the narrative quickly changes to a tale of the victory at Vimy, I think perhaps the cheering simply came in a bit too soon, especially as the cheering sounds continue until Danielle speaks about the triumph of the Canadian troops.

When speaking of the costs of this victory, as she begins to talk about the loss of life that occurred, the poignant piano music that had been used at the beginning is faded back in and remains quietly in the background throughout the discussion of significance.

#### 7.2.3.4 Analysis of Significance

Danielle's transition from historical account to discussion of significance is marked with the following lines from her narration:

> There aren't many occasions where an event results in over 30,000 casualties, but this isn't the only reason why the battle was so significant. World War I was greatly affected by the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Many

> historians believe that this battle alone was the cause of the war ending two years prior to the expected date. If things didn't end as early as they did, our modern civilization may not be the same.

The analysis section, which also runs for one minute and thirty-eight seconds (the same as the previous section), contains but four images from the *Traces of the Past* media kit—the other 19 images were ones Danielle found on her own. A number of the images that Danielle uses in this section are noteworthy. Below, I highlight some of these images and draw on my interview with Danielle to provide her interpretation of several of them.

**Red Ensign**

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, three of the films included an image of the Canadian Red Ensign flag. Danielle is the only one of the three to have used the correct version of the Red Ensign that Canada flew from 1868 until 1921. In Danielle's video, the Red Ensign appears as she reads the following line of narration:

> Earning a separate seat at the Versailles peace negotiation was a huge step to Canada's independence, which we have now attained.

At the point she suggests Canadian's independence has been realized, the Red Ensign fades and an image of the Canadian Maple Leaf flag cuts in. The following reflects my conversation with Danielle about her use of this image:

Researcher: Okay. So this particular flag [indicating Red Ensign] how did you decide to use this one?

Danielle: What do you mean?

Researcher: Um, how did you…what, um, what made you choose this particular flag?

Danielle: Because it showed…you know like how ours before, our….

Researcher: Mmm hmm.

Danielle: …um current one? Um, I showed how we went from being like governed or controlled kinda by the British, and stuff like that, into like, you know, our own flag and sovereignty and stuff.

Researcher: Right. Okay. So did you—how did you—did you look up and find out that this is the correct flag that Canada had at the time?

Danielle: I wrote like "19something" and "Canadian flag" and I looked on different resources and stuff to make sure. Is it…?

Researcher: Yeah, this is the correct one.

Danielle: It's right? Oh great.

Researcher: No one else used it.

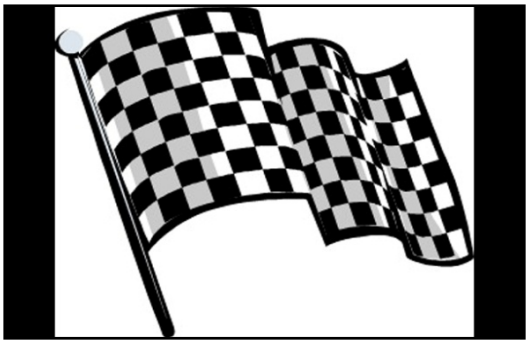
Danielle: Yeah. It took a while to find.

It is unclear, and I neglected to ask, whether Danielle had known previously that Canada had flown another flag during WWI, or whether she had simply used a Search Engine to seek out this information. Either way, she took pains to make sure that what she used was the correct one of three Red Ensigns Canada has flown at different points. Danielle's use of the fade between the two flags is very effective. She might have chosen to use a dissolve as the producers of another video opted to do, but the fade gives Danielle's flag sequence a subtely different meaning—rather than smoothly transitioning from one to the other, hers gives a sense of something coming to an end followed by a new beginning.

**Chequered Flag**

There is a clear attempt, in many of the ima

**Figure 7-2 - Chequered Flag. Copyright free image from the public domain.**



visual track the exact contents of the verbal information provided in the voiceover. For example, as Danielle finishes her retelling of what happened during the battle of Vimy Ridge and begins her assessment of what it meant for Canada, she uses the image of a black and white chequered starter's flag from racing. In interview, when I asked her about the selection and meaning of this image, Danielle had a hard time remembering what had prompted her to use it. However as she viewed the video again and examined the surrounding materials, she indicated it was because Vimy Ridge marked the *start* of a change and a racing flag is used to signal the start of a race. Similarly, elsewhere in the video Danielle used the logo of what I have since determined to be a financial management company from the United States called Turning Point™. This logo is pink and rather abstract and the only thing about it that communicates the idea 'turning point' is the pink and swirly text in the logo. This image coincided with a discussion in the voice track in which Danielle spoke of battle as being a *turning point* in Canada's history. Thus at various points, Danielle was looking for visualizations that were a direct translation from the verbal into the visual modes of communication.

**Canada Divided**

At another point in the video, Danielle's discusses the way in which, as a result of the conscription crisis, the Battle of Vimy Ridge might be seen as a divisive event as opposed to a unifying one in Canada's past. To get this point of a country divided across to her viewer using visual means, Danielle dissolved an outline map of the province of Quebec into the image shown in Figure 7-3. Suggesting that Quebec was divided from the rest of Canada. The following is an interview excerpt in which Danielle discusses her use of this image:

**Figure 7-3 - 'Canada Divided' Map. Copyright free image from the public domain.**


Researcher: Okay, that one, the line going through it, divided—the country divided. How did you come up with doing that one?

Danielle: Um, well, I tried to find one where uh…umm…Ca—Quebec seemed um out of place or something?

Researcher: Right.

Danielle: And it [points to voice track on the computer] said like "divide the country", so I was trying to look for a different map, but then I couldn't find one so I put this one in Paint [computer application] and I made a line through it.

Researcher: Interesting.

Danielle: I thought it would help people get a visual in a way.

Researcher: Right.

**Thinking about the Past**

Another composite image Danielle presented in her video contains a number of smaller images pieced together. In a panel on the left of the screen, she included three images—the brain, the weighty tome, and Rodin's *The Thinker* (1902) combined to connote a general sense of "thinking". In a panel on the right, with the text reading "past" suggests the image is meant to communicate the idea of thinking about the past. Also, with the prominence of the cogs on the right as well, there is also a suggestion of change. So perhaps the image of the cogs adds the idea of thinking about changes that have happened in the past.

While Danielle and I spoke about this image in my interview with her, the discussion got sidetracked when she related that Mr. Gagnon has suggested that the image of *The Thinker* was "out of place". This appeared to upset her and she became reticent to speak about the image after mentioning Mr. Gagnon's comment, so I moved on without getting a chance to unpack the image with Danielle. It is clear to me that she had been trying to create a complex visual collage.

**Question Mark Animation**

The last of Danielle's images that I will discuss is a rather hard one to describe. It is an animated image that I suspect may have been used on a government website. The most prominent part of the image is a large slanted

question mark which is positioned over top of a rendering of Canada's land mass. To give an idea of the rough scale, Hudson's Bay forms the point of the question mark. Peering down at the country from about where Alaska would be, is a human figure. Although I have referred to it as an animation, nothing in the image moves, but the background and "Canada" cycle through a number of different colors.

Researcher: Okay. This one.

Danielle: Yeah?

Researcher: What…what…the…'cause it looks like the point of the question mark is in Hudson's Bay. So what was this representing to you?

Danielle: Mmmmm. Well, not. Yeah, I mean the point of the question mark is in Hudson's Bay, but this one was supposed to be like um, can you…can we listen to that part? I'm pretty sure, but just to make sure I'm saying the right thing.

Video: Canadian viewers (sic) were divided about the participation in the war. Many viewed the war as an…"

Danielle: Um, like the different viewpoints and stuff like that.

Researcher: Okay.

Danielle: Like the question mark and…it showed that there are so many types of viewpoints. Like it changes colors and like that's to show, like, the different kinds of viewpoints and stuff like that?

Researcher: Oh okay.

Danielle: So there were more, there were many, they were diverse.

Researcher: So this shows that back home people were looking at things in different ways?

Danielle: Yeah.

Once again, Danielle's intent was to visually realize a rather complex idea that was being presented in the narrative. Also noteworthy in this excerpt from the interview is the use of the word "viewers" in the voiceover of the documentary. I doubt Danielle is referring to those watching News Reels back in Canada, thus I am presuming this usage is intertextual in nature and comes from watching news programs which tend to reference the population at large as "viewers".

### 7.2.4 Summary of In Depth Analyses

In addition to, and perhaps even *related* to the wide differences in the use of student-obtained images in Sharon and Danielle's videos, these individuals each employed very different styles of editing and visual representation. There is clear evidence, in Danielle's video as well as in the transcripts of my interview with her, to suggest that she views visual representation as a kind of translation of the verbal into the visual. Sometimes the results were visually sophisticated, other times, as in the case of the chequered flag, they were less so. Danielle's style of editing appears to have been strictly ruled by the contents and timing of the voiceover. In terms of Nichols' two kinds of editing, Danielle only employed evidentiary editing. In fact, in very few places in her video are any two images related to one another—the notable exception being the shots of the two flags with the fade between them.

Sharon's styles of visual representation and video editing were markedly different. While she used evidentiary editing in various sections of the video, she also employed match action editing in several places. In addition to the one

elaborate battle sequence, Sharon also cut together a handful of other sequences that Metz (1974b) would call syntagmas—groups of shots that cohere to form a string or piece of visual information.

While James and Allan's video contained one brief match action sequence, the remainder of their narrative was told using evidentiary editing. Much like the use of the funereal picture in the previous chapter, based on its nominal rather than physical meaning. James and Allan's use of the Christmas parade among others of the images they selected, suggests that the physical depiction of the image was less important to them than was the nominal depiction.

## 7.3 Discussion

One goal of this field trial was to place the design—the editing tools and historical materials—into the hands of the students in order to see the range of work they might produce. There is tremendous variety in what the students created with the tools and materials at their disposal.

### 7.3.1 Visual Representation

As I stated in the previous chapter, the number of images the students sought on their own, as well as the nature of those images, was occasionally quite surprising to me. As the analyses progressed, it was also illuminating to see what the students did with those images.

Many of the students saw the process of editing the documentary as one in which the visual mode was, both in terms of time and contents, strictly tied to the verbal mode. On this topic, Kress suggests:

> At the moment, relatively naïve notions of visualisation dominate. Visualisation is seen as an unproblematic kind of 'translation' from one semiotic mode into another—as a simplistic kind of translation from one language into another. But as English makes available certain forms of expression which are not available in the very closely related language of German, and vice versa, so also with 'translations' from the verbal (written or spoken) to the visual (1998, p. 55)

The results presented in both the previous chapter and this one would seem to suggest that many of the students hold this conception of visualization as translation, which Kress describes. When she displayed the swirly pink Turning Point™ logo while she was discussing the Battle of Vimy Ridge as being a turning point for Canada, Danielle was clearly attempting this kind of direct translation from the verbal into the visual.

I would argue that this conception of visual representation is a contributing factor in the number of images students obtained independently. I had designed the media kits with a very different conception of visual representation in mind—wherein the visuals would *complement* the verbal message, but were not required to *mimic* it directly.

Kress poses a set of questions regarding nature of the relationship between the verbal and the visual:

> Do they merely co-exist? Or do they interact? To what degree do they interact? If language and image do not merely coexist, but interact, what are the consequences? If they have different

> potentials will they serve different functions, and then inevitably become specialized, both representationally and communicationally (ibid.)?

Barthes (1967), in dealing with this same issue distinguished two kinds of relationship between the visual and the verbal that are reasonably similar to that which I noted in the student videos in the previous chapter. With some adaptation, these might be useful in characterizing the different ways the students approached visual representation. The first type of relationship Barthes called *anchorage*, under which the verbal message acts to anchor or fix the meaning of the visual. Barthes was dealing with print ads and the lines of text that accompany the images in such ads, but is nonetheless similar enough to still be useful. The second relationship Barthes called *relay*, by which he meant a situation where "text and image stand in a complementary relationship; the words, in the same way as the images are fragments of a more general syntagm and the unity of the message is realized at a higher level" (1967, p. 41).

While their conception of what it means to represent something visually is likely a contributing factor in students seeking so many of their own images, there are no doubt several others. For some of the students creativity and a desire to make their video different or unique motivated them to find their own materials. For others, it was more a matter of exercising control by choosing their own images. Additionally, given the students' clear preference for still images (due very likely to their greater elasticity of length in the editing process and the fact that the kits only contained thirty-four stills) might also have been a contributing factor. However, it must also be noted that the kits clearly were lacking in some

areas—such as the conscription crisis. Clearly, future iterations of the design could benefit by augmenting the media kits. However, as students would no doubt wish to continue exercising their agency and maximizing the uniqueness of their own projects, they would likely continue to obtain their own materials illicitly.

# 8: CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, I revisit the driving questions of the study and attempt to draw together the various strands of evidence presented earlier, to address them. I will begin by addressing the student response to the innovation itself. Then I turn my attention to the four focused research questions I posed in the methods section. Addressing each of the questions in turn, I summarize what the data analysis reveals regarding each. I wrap up this chapter, as well the thesis more broadly, by addressing the limitations of the design and the study, and then by offering some insights as to directions future research in this area might take.

## 8.1 How students responded

On the whole, students responded positively to the design. A number of questions on the post survey were intended to canvas student response to the innovation (digital video editing as a tool for history learning) and to the design of the unit specifically. In particular, there was an open-ended question that asked: "Do you think moviemaking is a good way to express what you have learned in social studies about Canada's role in World War I? Please elaborate." Of the twenty-eight who took the survey, nineteen participants responded positively to this question, supplying such responses as these four:

Talia: Yes, I thought it was a good way although it was somewhat difficult to put together. But through research and all, I learnt quite a bit more than if I had read the textbook.

Rhonda: Yes, because videos and pictures offer more depth and affect on WWI. It shows and also tells how the war was like and the contributions that Canada gave to the war.

Janine: Yes, because I got to use videos and pictures that I thought related to what I felt about the war. It was a great way to express myself in an alternative to writing.

Brenda: Yes, I think movie making is a good way to express what you have learned in social studies. This is because it not only allows you to say what you learned, you also get to add visuals. Visuals help learning in my opinion.

Four of the participants offered responses that were equivocal or ambivalent, two of which are:

Roger: Yeah, a little. I think this time every student used the same video clips (resources) which doesn't make ours that much different.

Danielle: Yes and NO. You can express it in any way and have similar affects (sic), but it was nice to see the completed work.

The remaining five respondents were clear in suggesting that they did not think the project was a good way to express what they had learned. Here are three such responses:

Calvin: No, because it's just like a very old, poorly recorded video of WWI.

Trent: No, it really expresses our video skills more then (sic) our knowledge on it.

Jennifer: No, because reading off the outline and textbook doesn't go into depth.

The other two negative responses suggest that the students believed they would have received better grades had they written an essay. In interview, these participants further suggested that those students with prior video editing experience were unfairly privileged on the project, and would have received higher grades. As this came up in several of my interviews, I compared the students' level of editing experience (as self-reported on the first survey) with the final grades they received for the videos. As it turns out, the average grades received by those students who reported no experience at all or having 'played around' with the software some received marginally higher grades than those who reported they had edited a video or two.

**Table 8-1 - Video Editing Experience vs. Average Grades on the Videos**

| Experience | Avg. Grade |
|---|---|
| None | 83% |
| Played around | 83% |
| Edited 1-2 videos | 80% |

Two further questions on my survey sought to understand what the students thought was good about the project and what they did not like about it by asking them to describe the best and then the worst thing about the project. While a number of the responses defied categorization, four themes emerged from 22 of the responses. Seven described the "finished product", the video, or the movie itself as being the best part. Five suggested that it was the "movie clips" or the "visuals of the war" that were the best part. Another five indicated it was the editing that was the best—either by using the word or by describing the process: "everything coming together, the words and pictures working together." Finally, five responses suggested that the application or working on the computers that was the best.

The students' responses regarding the worst thing about the project are very revealing. Twelve of the students referenced time—some suggesting the project demanded too much of it, others indicating that they did not have enough of it. The next most common response had to do with the rigors of editing and the challenges the students faced in aligning the pictures to the sound or in timing things out. Finally, six of the participants felt that computer crashes or other technical problems were the worst part of the project. The final respondent suggested that the audio recording was the worst thing.

Two of the closed questions on the survey are also useful in establishing how the students felt about the use of video in social studies. Both questions ask students to situate themselves in response to a proposition using a four-point scale extending from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The first proposition is the following statement, "I would like to do more video editing projects in school?" Student responses to this question are shown in Figure 8-1 and suggest that the participants are

**Figure 8-1 - Response to: "I would like to do more video editing projects in school."**

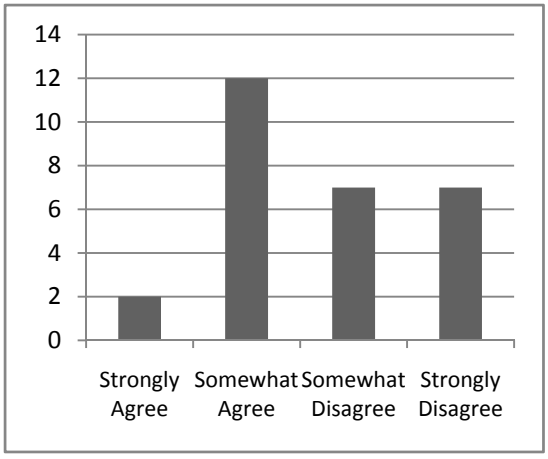
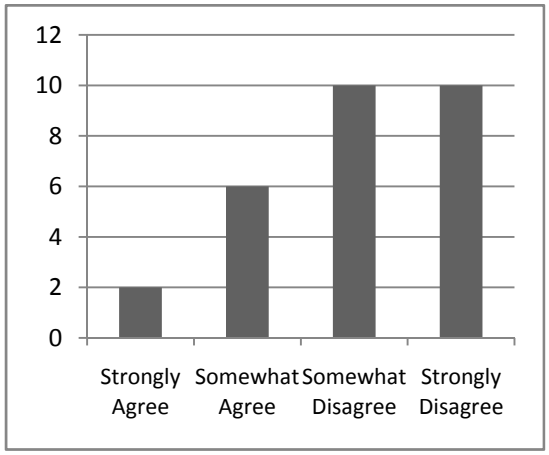



**Figure 8-2 - Response to: "I would have preferred writing an essay to editing a movie."**



divided on this question.

"I would have preferred writing an essay to editing a movie" was the second statement on which students were asked to take a position. On this question, it would appear there is greater agreement, as the majority of the participants clearly disagree with the statement.

## 8.2 Addressing the Research Questions

Since I first began to consider creating a design to support historical thinking with an exercise involving video editing, my broad research goal has been to better understand what potential the process of constructing a video has as a tool for learning. As the design central to this study progressed, the more focused research questions that I presented in the methods chapter emerged. I shall now discuss what the results of the various analyses I have undertaken indicate in response to each of these questions.

### 8.2.1 Research Question One

1. What can the analysis of students' historical documentary videos reveal about their understanding of history?

There were two broad goals of the Vimy Ridge video project. The first was to have students construct their own account of the battle as opposed to simply processing one presented by the textbook or the teacher. The second goal was to have students work with the concept of historical significance by using three criteria—*resulting in change*, *revealing*, and *connected to a larger narrative*.

Among the various communicative strands of the videos that were examined, it is the analysis of the voiceovers and the visual imagery that were most revealing in response to this question.

#### 8.2.1.1 Voiceovers

Overall, the students performed very well on the first portion of their assigned task--the vast majority of the participant videos contain well-researched, engaging tales of the Battle of Vimy Ridge and Canada's role in it. [Add brief discussion regarding the mythologized nature of the accounts.]

When it came to working with the concept of historical significance, all but a couple of the videos demonstrated that the students made a concerted effort to engage with this concept—using at least one, and oftentimes two or more of the three criteria. *Resulting in change* was used the most often, and appears to have been the criterion the students found to be the most accessible. The *revealing* criterion was apparently more difficult to grasp as many of the students who attempted to work with it ended up abstracting what were in some cases rather superficial lessons from the event—such as the value of cooperation.

Canada's eventual independence from Britain was a larger narrative to which about two thirds of the videos drew connections, while about half mentioned the 1917 Conscription Crisis. In the case of the former, many of the students saw Canada's independence as a direct result of the battle rather than seeing it a complex narrative into which the battle was woven, but their use of the *part of a larger narrative* historical significance criterion was rather good.

Finally, by providing conflicting interpretations of the war, it was not necessarily assumed that students would attempt to present one of those alternate viewpoints, merely that they would acknowledge them and use them to present a more balanced account that took into consideration that historical significance is something which is both contested and varies over time and from culture to culture. Despite both of the classes being encouraged to do so on several occasions, only two of the videos included any kind of acknowledgement that there are alternate perspectives one might take up when considering the significance of the battle. In order to really and truly understand historical significance, students need to apprehend that significance is something that varies over time and from one culture to the next. That so few of the narratives acknowledged other perspectives is striking, and clearly demonstrates that students need more assistance in coming to understand the contested and relative nature of historical significance.

#### 8.2.1.2 Visual Imagery

The visual analyses, particularly those pertaining to the images students sourced for themselves on the internet, revealed a rather different aspect of the students' historical understanding. While a handful of students clearly took pains to find images that were historically accurate, many others appeared to disregard the historical reality of what an image depicted and instead made image selections on a different basis.

Beyond simply lacking the ability to distinguish an image that is from WWI from one that depicts events and people involved in WWII, there are two issues

that arose in visual analyses. The first of these involves the images that appear to have been plucked from a search engine without proper attention to the surrounding materials. I doubt that the bright pair of students who used the UN logo would have done so had they known it was from a *Star Trek* fan page. Likewise, I suspect the students who used the image of the long dead (and fictional) Spanish 'Flu victim would not have done so had they known it was a screen capture from a television drama. Then again, perhaps they might have. Thus, the video project had the advantage, for assessment purposes, of giving students scope to demonstrate gaps in their historical knowledge that would not have otherwise been apparent. I will return to this in the following sections.

### 8.2.2 Research Question Two

2. What can an analysis of students' historical documentary videos reveal about the potential of the medium as a means of expressing students' understanding of history?

#### 8.2.2.1 Communicative vs. Historical Thinking

Teachers have long been using visual media such as photographs, paintings, and cinematic productions to help students to visualize and connect with the past. Prior to implementing the design, my feelings regarding the potential of movie making as means of supporting historical thinking was that it might provide prolonged exposure to such visual primary sources and that such exposure would promote a deeper analysis of the contents of such visual media.

Following my analyses of the student videos, I came to believe this is the case for some students. For others, however, it seems that rather than engaging

with the contents of the images and examining what these artefacts might reveal about the historical world, they skimmed the surface of the images.

The analyses of the student videos seem to indicate that the potential of the medium to support historical understanding was not as fully realized as it could be. One of the purposes of this study was to simply observe how students might appropriate the design, and what they would construct from the materials provided. Having observed how the students appropriated the design, my conclusion is that the potential has not been diminished, but that a potential pitfall has been identified—a pitfall that will need to be avoided in future iterations of the design in order for the a proper examination of the potential of the design. That pitfall surrounds very real tensions that exist between the discipline of history and cinematic expression.

The results presented in Chapters 6 and 7 drew attention to certain tensions that exist between the discipline of history and the documentary film genre. Documentary cinema is highly rhetorical in nature. While many would argue (me among them) that written history is also rhetorical, the use of images in rendering accounts of the past sets documentaries apart from more text-based renderings of the past. When applied to the student video data, Nichols' four motivational forms and Plantinga's juxtaposition of physical versus nominal depictions of images both suggest that when historical images are used in a cinematic text, they are predominantly used as functional or rhetorical objects, not historical ones.

In more professionally produced documentary videos, images may be plucked out of context and used in a nominal or de-contextualized fashion (thus putting their use in some tension with the discipline of history), but there are certain conventions which professional documentarians follow which the students in this study, understandably, did not. For example, professional historical documentary producers would not use an image from the Mexican-American war in a documentary about the American Civil War, regardless of how powerful the nominal meaning of the image. Thus, while there are very real tensions between documentary cinema and the discipline of history, the anachronistic and otherwise questionable image choices made by students were not simply a result of these tensions, but were influenced by additional factors.

Wineburg (2001) argues that historical thinking is not something that comes naturally. I agree, and would submit that thinking communicatively is something that also does not come naturally, but it is something to which students are better prepared to engage in through a lifetime of exposure. Clearly one cannot create a documentary video without thinking communicatively; but the potential of the medium is diminished if communicative thinking is done at the expense of historical thinking. Thus in order for a historical documentary to get its message across while remaining true to the discipline of history, one needs to engage in both historical and communicative thinking.

#### 8.2.2.2 Teachable Moments

In my interviews with the students, as we examined some of the image choices that they had made, I began to see learning potential in the anachronistic

and ‘questionable’ images the students had selected. Many of the images that were used anachronistically related to topics that come later in the grade 11 curriculum. Instead of viewing these images as problematic, they may instead be viewed as potential teachable moments. That so many students used the Maple leaf flag to represent World War I Canada, for example could provide opportunity for a discussion of the Red Ensign, the introduction of the adoption of the Maple Leaf flag in 1965, and the turmoil that surrounded that decision.

Similarly, the use of maps containing Newfoundland as a province or Nunavut as a territory to represent the Dominion of Canada in 1917 provide a platform for discussing Canadian geography and the two major changes to the map of Canada to have taken place in the 20th Century. Likewise, the use of the likeness of Queen Elizabeth II to represent the monarchy at the time of the First World War provides an opportunity to examine the fact that King George V was one of just four monarchs to head the British Empire in the 20th Century. Thus, there is tremendous potential for the simple and very understandable mistakes that students made to become springboards for learning.

### 8.2.3 Research Question Three

3. What changes to the Traces of the Past media kit might better support students in historical thinking?

#### 8.2.3.1 More Visuals

The number and kind of images that students obtained on their own suggests that the contents of media kit need to be examined and expanded. In the year subsequent to the implementation written about in this study, additional

materials were collected from various archives—showing such things as men enlisting and shipping off to war, and the end of war including the celebrations in the streets and lines of soldiers marching home. Some newspaper headlines have also been gathered as one means, typical to cinema, of visualizing certain events that are challenging to represent visually. One topic students often found difficult to visually represent is that of the Conscription Crisis. Thus the media kit has been expanded to include images of the riots from 1917 that left several Quebecers dead, as well as headlines depicting the acrimony on both sides of the issue.

#### 8.2.3.2 Secondary Source Material

The design the students in this study worked with contained links to pages on the web that contained information regarding the Battle of Vimy Ridge and other aspects of the Canadian participation in the war. Future versions of the media kit might instead contain secondary source data within the media kit so that students are able to find out about such things as the creeping barrage on the site. Such data might include video clips of historians discussing various aspects of the battle as well as short excerpts from prominent accounts of the battle of Vimy Ridge and the role played by Canadian forces.

#### 8.2.3.3 Alternate Perspectives

Another potential addition to the media kit would be the inclusion of a complement of fully realized alternate perspectives on the significance of the battle. For example, one could include arguments from a Quebecois perspective

suggesting that while the Battle of Vimy Ridge is an important battle, it is far less significant than the Conscription Crisis. One could also include arguments concerning the mythologized nature of the battle, and perhaps a British perspective suggesting that there is no Battle of Vimy Ridge and that what the Canadians call this is really just a four-day stretch within the Battle of Arras. Including such materials within the kit would require less time to be devoted by students to finding their own sources. Such materials, might also allow students to better see the contested and constructed nature of history.

### 8.2.4 Research Question Four

4. What formative changes are warranted to improve the curricular design as a whole?

#### 8.2.4.1 Support Students in Image Selection

One option for dealing with the anachronistic and questionable images would be to restrict students to working with the materials provided. However, the data suggests that students sought materials from outside the media kits for a number of reasons, among which, as suggested in the excerpt below from my interview with James and Allan, were issues of agency and originality:

James: I liked going on the internet because then you get to choose which picture you want.

Allan: I wanted ours to look different. If that was in there then everyone else would use it.

Instead of stifling the students' sense of agency or control by not allowing them what they no doubt see as an element of self expression, supports might be

provided to help students make better choices when searching for their own materials. Such supports might help students to understand that the physical contents of the image—especially when examined in a historical milieu—are very important to note. Appropriate supports might also help students to pay more attention to the context surrounding the images on the web—so that they are aware of the nature and purpose of the site from which they are gathering images. These supports might also address issues of copyright, as in several cases, images used by students were in blatant violation of copyright (i.e. a watermark over an image identifying it as the property of the Australian Museum of History).

#### 8.2.4.2 Support the Script Writing Process.

While clearly one of the most important aspects of the overall design and one that should not be glossed over, the script writing process took a disproportionately long time. Based on my observations in the computer lab and subsequent discussion with Mr. Gagnon, better support for students before and during this process might be warranted. Rather than simply providing students with an example to follow, some explicit instruction regarding how to approach the script and how to make decisions about visual representation might help the students to understand how to approach the visual column of the script, and help them to realize that the visual track does not need to directly mimic that the verbal content.

#### 8.2.4.3 Screening

A group screening of the student-produced films—whether during class time, at lunch, or after school— might provide a good opportunity for students to see the work of their peers and learn from the craft it displays, the research it presents, or the teachable moments it provides. Preferably, all of the videos would be shown in sequence, with time to stop every now and then to discuss the contents and generate a list of learning opportunities to be taken up at a later time. In this way, the filmmaking could provide a means to enrich the curriculum that follows.

#### 8.2.4.4 Revise the Rubric

Questions arose during the video analyses regarding what is and what is not appropriate in a student video that is used as an expression of what had been learned in historical pursuits. The only guidelines that exist at present are those which reflect what might be acceptable in a more professional documentary. For example, while using modern rock and roll music might be frowned upon in a historical documentary produced for the NFB or PBS, decisions need to be made about whether such music (issues of copyright aside) might be seen in the context of a student video as simply a matter of personal expression. Likewise, the time that images remain on screen and the widespread use of still images as opposed to video clips need to be examined. While these may be considered problematic in a more professional program, they might and perhaps *should* be considered perfectly acceptable in the video of a high school social studies student.

To address these and other issues, the rubric needs to be revisited and perhaps elements of the technical competency adjusted to be more in line with the work that was produced and is realistic given the circumstances.

## 8.3 Limitations

As is generally the case in research, there are certain limitations, with regard to both the pedagogical design and the study—which deserve some discussion.

### 8.3.1 Design Limitations

One of the more obvious limitations of the curricular unit as a whole is the amount of time it consumes—both in relation to the crowded grade 11 social studies curriculum, and in terms of the time *outside* of class that the teacher may need to devote in order to support students' work. However, as Mr. Gagnon successfully implemented the design on his own in the year following the enactment of the design that is reported on in this study, the design shows promise as being something that might be used with success by teachers in other sites.

Another limitation to the widespread use of this design is the equipment need, in the form of digital audio recording devices -- which are not a common equipment item in schools. As implementing the design might very well require the purchase of a set of audio recorders, use of the design might be limited.

### 8.3.2 Study Limitations

The data that were collected and analyzed for this study cannot reveal what the medium of film *itself* might contribute to the overall learning that took place when the design was implemented. To have done this, one might have collected comparison data of student essay writing on the topic of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, or some other measure of learning. Unlike the horse race studies mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the point of gathering such data would not be to see which medium is better or more efficient for learning or assessment, but to better understand the unique affordances of each medium as a means of expressing and developing historical understanding.

The scripts the participants prepared, which detailed how they planned to construct their videos, would have afforded a deeper examination of the planning stage of the documentaries. That these data were not available for analysis is an additional limitation that deserves mention. The student scripts would have shed some light on how the students were pre-visualizing the editing of their projects. This, in turn, might have provided insights as to some of the editing decisions that were made.

## 8.4 Directions for Further Study

Historian Robert Rosenstone (1995) asks, “Why do we always judge film by how it measures up to written history? If it is true that the word can do many things that images cannot, what about the reverse—don’t images carry ideas and information that cannot be handled by the word?” (p. 5). As was suggested above, one of the main weaknesses of this study is that it did not attempt to

examine in comparative terms what the medium of film itself might have contributed to the learning process. To rectify this situation, future research might compare products created in different media in order to begin to better examine the potential of the video medium as a means of expressing students' historical understanding.

As this study is in the mode of design-based research, there are clear implications for future iterations of the design. The next step is to implement an expanded version of the design that takes the proposed changes as detailed above into consideration. Implementing the curricular unit in multiple sites will provide data as to how other teachers might enact the design and how students in other contexts might appropriate it.

In future iterations, research questions and data collection and analyses might seek to probe the nature of the planning and scriptwriting process and especially how students approach visual representation.

## 8.5 Final Thoughts

In trying to honestly depict the important limitations of the unit design and the work it supported in Mr. Gagnon's class, I risk coming off as pessimistic about the potential of digital video editing as a tool for history teaching. However, I am not. It can be counted as something of a triumph that despite the vast majority of Mr. Gagnon's students having no previous video editing experience, they *all* completed and submitted videos with a substantial narrative component. In the films, most students tackled the historical significance of the battle,, and

some of them told quite compelling historical accounts that made sophisticated use of the historical significance criteria.

In terms of the students' response, it must be noted that the task they were handed required considerably more work than a traditional in-class essay. In fact, one might suggest that the verbal portion of their movie scripts was the equivalent of writing an essay, and that the rest of the work involved was over and above what they would have done to complete an essay. The fact the majority of students stated they would *not* have preferred writing an essay, and would like to do more editing in future, suggests that most of the students found the extra effort worthwhile. Given the now-famous dislike that students generally have for social studies as a subject, this alone suggests that there is potential in digital video editing that begs further investigation.

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# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A.

# Mr. Gagnon's Vimy Project Handout

## What was so important about Vimy Ridge and World War One? How should we remember these events?

**Assignment:** Create a two minute video on Vimy Ridge (or, with permission, on some other aspect of WW I). Your audience will be students at our school Remembrance Day celebration or students in other social studies classes. The video should tell the story of this famous battle and its significance and suggest why we should remember it.

The video should use clips of archival footage that will be provided to you on CD (and may be available on-line). You will also create a narration to tell the history and answer the focus questions above. You are booked to be in the computer room on _____ __ and __, at the end of which you should submit a story board outlining what you plan to show and say. The room is also booked for ____ __ and __ to complete your editing and the final project is due October __.

We will use the video editing software called MovieMaker2 that is available free on Windows XP. There is a good tutorial on how to use it at http://www.atomiclearning.com/moviemaker2.

## Your script (storyboard/paper edit)

Your first steps will be (1) to choose images that will help tell your story, (2) organize them in a logical order, and (3) write a script. This script needs not only to tell what happened but also explain the significance and how we should remember these events.

An event is significant in history if it results in change at the time or if it somehow reveals something or teaches us something that is relevant to us today. Below is an outline of some ways Canadians have answered the question "Why were Vimy and other events of WW I significant?"

Vimy was significant because it resulted in deep change for many people. The Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge in World War I in April, 1917, was an extraordinary success. At a cost of 10, 000 casualties, the Canadian Corps captured more land, cannons, and weapons, and took more prisoners than the British had in two and a half years of war. The *New York Tribune* said that

Canada had fielded a better army than Napoleon. Historian Desmond Morton argues that Vimy Ridge and the successes of the Canadian Corps in subsequent battles were key in ending the war two years earlier than had been predicted.

Canadians were proud. In a time when Britain controlled our foreign affairs, we had “come of age.” Our contribution lead Britain to recognize full Canadian sovereignty and we took a seat at the League of Nations. According to Morton, “Doing great things together…is how nations are formed. Vimy was such a moment.”

This achievement offers a model of the great things that Canadians are capable of doing together. Canadians were also inspired by the bravery and sacrifice of so many individual soldiers.

This is the main tradition or official memory of Vimy. It is part of a master narrative that explains how Canada has developed as an autonomous and great nation that fights for human rights and freedom. Although some of the story changed over the years -- at first Canadian celebrations on November 11 recognized the dead and saw their sacrifice in religious terms similar to Jesus, later the focus was on the veterans, and more recently we recognize the civilians who also gave so much to the war effort -- the general positive outcome of the war for Canada was consistent.

There is, however, a “counter narrative.” This story is less about Vimy and more about World War One and wars in general. Here is how historian Daniel Francis expresses this:

> For good reason, most Canadians have accepted the official view… To question the war is to dishonour the fallen, and they, after all, died for us. But there has always been a counter narrative, muted but persistent, that found the appalling slaughter pointless, and the people who sanctioned it incompetent, even evil… Soldiers are ordinary men just trying to survive through the horror, not… saintly warriors depicted in memorial paintings and statues.

Vimy’s significance from this perspective recognizes the significance, but the lessons, the light it shines on modern questions about war and peace, are very different from the inspirational ones of the traditional point of view.

Moreover, for many people of Québec there is still another different narrative. The Québec story recognizes the achievement of the Canadian Corps at Vimy Ridge and other victories but gives them less importance than the issue of military conscription. Many Quebeckers such as Henri Bourassa saw the world war as part of European imperialism. It was not in Canada’s interest even to be involved. Rather than unite the nation, it divided it.

Other Québecers challenged Canada's commitment to freedom and equality in Europe when French language rights were under attack back in Canada. In the middle of the war in 1916, for example, Manitoba abolished bilingual schools.

Therefore, for some Québecers the Battle of Vimy Ridge was significant, but much less so than it was for English-Canadians. Moreover, the reasons for the significance of the whole war are very different.

For your video you will need to look carefully at these arguments and decide which ones make the most sense and express them in your own words.

## Four Ways to Reflect on World War One at a Remembrance Day Ceremony:

One of the criteria for significance is relevance to us today. What follows are four different ways that we could think about the war that could be part of your narration.

***The Past Defines Us:*** We are clearly tied to our military past because it is this tradition that has made us who we are today. Vimy, for example, led to greater autonomy for Canada and a sense that we are one nation. On Remembrance Day we should pay tribute to this traditional story and to the sacrifice of our soldiers.

***The Past is a Source of Lessons and Models:*** Vimy Ridge clearly showed what Canadians can do. It also showed the importance of a core of experienced military leaders, disciplined soldiers, and careful planning. In addition, many Canadians have been inspired by the sacrifice and bravery of our soldiers. Remembrance Day could be a time to teach these and other lessons to young people.

***The past is not relevant to us today:*** This approach does not accept the traditional stories. For example, a Québec student may pay little attention to Vimy Ridge but see great importance in Conscription. The story of Canada's increasing autonomy and national identity achieved on the battlefields of Europe may also have less importance for more recent Canadians whose war memories are from Asia, Africa or Latin America. Moreover, the war was a long time ago; Canada and the world have changed. (If you take this approach, be sure to be respectful to the soldiers and civilians who sacrificed so much in the wars and for whom Remembrance Day is an emotional day.)

***The past is important but we need to consider modern circumstances:*** For example, a Remembrance Day ceremony based on this approach might recognize the contribution of our veterans and the value of joining our allies to defeat Germany after it invaded Belgium, but argue that we should still be

cautious in sending our troops to other foreign wars such as those in Iraq or Afghanistan. Likewise, Vimy Ridge may teach a lesson about Canadian leadership, discipline, and courage but maybe these qualities in today's world could be put to use for other purposes than war.

## Script Rubric

| Criteria | Developing | Satisfactory | Accomplished | Sophisticated |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Planning | Superficial outline or copied from handouts or textbook; may be missing required elements or have very unrealistic timing | Most required elements are clearly developed; most ideas are connected; almost all writing is in student's own words; timing is mostly realistic | Almost all of the required elements are thoroughly planned; ideas are connected; timing is realistic | All required elements are thoughtfully and thoroughly planned; coherent sequence; realistic timing |
| | 0-2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

# Video Rubric

| Criteria | developing | satisfactory | proficient | distinguished |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Content:** story of the past | The story is either very confusing and inaccurate or it omits important events/ people; visuals and narration may be unrelated<br>0 10 | Some relevant content is explained but it may be limited or inaccurate in places; visuals and narration may need closer connection<br>12 14 | Most events and people are clearly and accurately explained; visual and narration work together<br>15 17 | The story is accurate, thorough, and coherent; visuals and narration work together to tell an engaging narrative<br>18 20 |
| **Content:** application of criteria for significance (resulting in change; relevant to today) | Does not apply criteria to the events; little or no support for opinions; may be offensive to audience<br>0 10 | Applies several criteria to some aspects of the event or uses criteria but without explanation of what criteria are; general ideas about how to remember the past; some supporting details<br>12 14 | Clearly applies all appropriate criteria with reasons and supporting examples; considers modern context in a thoughtful manner; appropriate to the audience<br>15 17 | Clearly applies all appropriate criteria; events are connected to a larger narrative; considers modern situation; includes insightful ideas not discussed in class or the readings; rich in supporting details; sensitive to audience<br>18 20 |
| **Sound and narration** | Sound quality was poor, inappropriate, and/or confusing; contained background noise<br>0 2 | Some additional sound or narration needed to tell story or message. Sound often appears and ends abruptly.<br>3 | Most sound and narration enhance the visuals. Editing of sound may not be smooth in places.<br>4 | Narration, sound, and visuals are well co-ordinated. Sound editing is crisp. No distractions.<br>5 |
| **Transitions, titles, and effects** | Not evident or minimal use<br>0 2 | A few are used but may not fit the content.<br>3 | Several transitions, titles and effects are used; most are smooth and effective<br>4 | Several transitions, titles and effects are used; they enhance the story/message<br>5 |
| **Editing** | Movie may be far shorter than required length; little coherence<br>0 2 | Movie is a series of clips with little coherence<br>3 | Clips are placed in logical order; transitions, effects, etc. mostly work together; quite engaging<br>4 | Effective flow; theme and message are easy to identify; crisp editing of clips; engaging; creative<br>5 |

# APPENDIX B.

# Pre-survey

**Editing Traces of the Past Survey #1**

1. **Which of the following best describes how much video editing experience you have?**

   None | I've played around a bit | I've edited a movie or two | I've edited 3 or more movies

2. **Which most closely describes how many hours of television you watched yesterday?**

   None | 1 – 2 hours | 2 – 3 hours | More than 3 hours

3. **Which most closely describes how many hours you spent on the computer yesterday?**

   None | 1 – 2 hours | 2 – 3 hours | More than 3 hours

4. **Which most closely describes how many hours you spent reading books or magazines (not online) yesterday?**

   None | 1 – 2 hours | 2 – 3 hours | More than 3 hours

5. **Is English your first language?**

   No | Yes

6. **Have you attended school outside of Canada?**

   No | Yes

7. **Do you have access to a video camera at home?**

   No | Yes

8. **Do you ever watch programs at home on History Television?**

   No | Yes

9. **Have you ever attended a Remembrance Day ceremony outside of school?**

   No | Yes

10. Using the numbers 1 through 4, please rank the following core subjects in the order that you feel they are most to least important for students to learn in school (most important = 1, least important = 4).

- ☐ Math
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English
- ☐ Sciences

11. What's the best thing about social studies?

_____

_____

_____

12. What's the worst thing about social studies?

_____

_____

_____

13. What do you want to do after high school?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your participation!

# APPENDIX C.

# Post-Survey

**Editing Traces of the Past Survey #2**

1. I put a lot of planning and effort into the documentary video I worked on.

| Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|

2. I learned something new about World War I while working on this video project.

| Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|

3. I want to take a copy of my documentary home to show family and friends.

| Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|

4. I would like to do more video projects in school.

| Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|

5. I would have preferred writing an essay to editing a movie.

| Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|

6. I enjoyed working on this project.

| Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|

7. Editing a documentary movie takes more effort than writing an essay.

| Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|

8. Seeing the video clips helped me to visualize what life was like for the soldiers in the First World War.

| Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|

9. If your documentary is viewed by other students for Remembrance Day, what do you hope they will learn from it?

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. Do you think moviemaking is a good way to express what you have learned in Social Studies about Canada's role in the World War I? Please elaborate.

11. What do you think was the *best* thing about working on this project?

12. What do you think was the *worst* thing about working on this project?

13. Do you think your documentary explains why World War I was significant? Please elaborate.

14. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments either about the project or about your own video?

Thank you for your participation!

# APPENDIX D.

# Teacher Interview Guide

1. Would you call the implementation this fall in the fall successful?

2. Will you implement the curricular unit again in future?

3. What do you think were the biggest hurdles?

4. What did you hope students would take away from the project?

5. What aspect (or aspects) of the project were the most worthwhile?

6. Can you discuss the influence of Peter Seixas' work and the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking project, broadly speaking, on your teaching practice?

7. When you first emailed Kevin early in 2005, what made you want to do a video project?

8. How do you feel the pilot last year went?
9. What were you happy with?
10. What do you think did not work?

11. What does a teacher thinking of using video editing need to know--what advice would you give him or her?

12. From your observations in the lab this fall, what do you think was the most challenging thing for the students?

13. Coming up with the script seemed to be a big challenge – how important do you think the script is to the learning that takes place in this project?

14. A lot of effort went into the project; pedagogically, was it worth it?

# APPENDIX E.

# Student Interview Guide

Watch video

*Project as a whole:*

1. Comments on the video – how do they feel about the video?
2. If you could do it again, what would you change?
3. On a scale between easy and hard, how would you characterize the whole video construction process?
4. What was hard, what was easy – why was it hard/easy?
5. Is there something that might be done to make it a better experience for students?

*Script/plan:*

6. Describe your experience with the script writing and visualization process.
7. How did you plan and write your script?
8. How useful was your script when it came to putting together the video?
9. What sources did you consult while writing your script?
10. (Based on main themes covered by student, ask student/video specific questions about certain topics that are either present or absent in the narrative…such as Conscription, Spanish 'Flu, role of women and why.

*Traces of the Past media kit:*

11. Did you find the organization of the video clips and stills helpful?
12. Approximately how many of the video clips might you have watched before beginning script writing?

13. How important was the information provided about each clip?

- Length?
- Description?
- Thumbnail?

14. How did you choose what visuals you wanted to work with – what was important to you when you looked at the materials?

*Image use motivations:*

15. List of noteworthy/student-obtained images in the video

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

16. What did you like about the image?
17. What compelled you to use a particular image?
18. What does this image mean to you?

# APPENDIX F.

# Voice Over/Significance Matrix

Voiceover Track - Significance Content Analysis

Video number: Participant #s:

| Appeal to Significance | ✓ | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| **Militarily Significant for the ultimate Allied victory** | | |
| Comparisons | | |
| Canadians did what French/ British failed to | | |
| Lost fewer men than French\British\Germans | | |
| Took more land/artillery/prisoners | | |
| Measures of significance | | |
| Took x amount of land | | |
| Took x amount of prisoners | | |
| Took x amount of artillery etc. | | |
| Turning point in the war/ milestone | | |
| Unique Canadian strategies and planning | | |
| Tactical/Strategic Value of the ridge | | |
| Helped win the war 2 years earlier | | |
| **Recognition and respect** | | |
| Recognition in US papers | | |
| International/World Recognition | | |
| French recognition | | |
| Other recognition | | |
| **Politically Significant for Canada nationally/ internationally** | | |
| First time Canadian corp assembled | | |
| Paris Peace Conference | | |
| Treaty of Versailles | | |
| League of Nations | | |
| Greater Independence from Britain | | |
| Other | | |
| **Socially Significant within Canada** | | |
| Social cohesion | | |
| Social divisiveness | | |
| Conscription Crisis | | |
| Increased tensions between francophones & anglophones in Canada | | |
| Increased role for women | | |
| **Economically Significant for Canada** | | |
| Increased industrialization | | |
| Labour shortages | | |
| **Memoria/Remembrance** | | |
| Vimy memorial | | |
| Other memorials | | |
| Remembrance Day/Nov. 11 | | |
| **Other** | | |
| Specify | | |

# APPENDIX G.

# Video Coding Printout from Avid Xpress® Pro

| TC | Frame | Track | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|
| 00;00;00;06 |  | V1 | V1a - fx (fade in) |
| 00;00;01;08 |  | V1 | V1b - title - The Battle of Vimy Ridge<br>04;00 |
| 00;00;04;00 |  | V1 | V2a - still - send more men - provided<br>10;00 |
| 00;00;12;19 |  | V1 | V2b - fx - (zoom out) |
| 00;00;14;00 |  | V1 | V3 - still - men on trucks - provided<br>05;00 |
| 00;00;18;11 |  | V1 | V4a - still Vimy map - provided<br>05;00 |
| 00;00;23;04 |  | V1 | V4b - fx (zoom in) |
| 00;00;23;11 |  | V1 | V5 - still Western Front map - provided<br>05;17 |

| TC | Frame | Track | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|
| 00;00;28;28 |  | V1 | V6 - video wwi_003 View from outside of trench as men scramble out<br>- provided |
| 00;00;34;00 |  | V1 | V7 - video - wwi_047 - One soldier carries another in on his back - provided |
| 00;00;39;02 |  | V1 | V8 - video - wwi_007 - Men slowly advancing - provided |
| 00;00;45;07 |  | V1 | V9 - video wwi_068 - Soldiers crouched low as they run, advancing on the enemy - provided |
| 00;00;48;22 |  | V1 | V10a - video - wwi_016 - view from German trenches as Canadians approach - provided |
| 00;00;53;08 |  | V1 | V10b - fx (freeze frame) |
| 00;00;55;01 |  | V1 | V10c = fx - (zoom in on FF) |
| 00;01;03;10 |  | V1 | V11 -video - wwi_093 Two machine guns one in the foreground and one<br>in the background firing continuously - provided |

| TC | Frame | Track | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|
| 00;01;11;24 |  | V1 | V12 - video - wwi_005 A Canadian highland regiment advances - provided |
| 00;01;14;27 |  | V1 | V13 - video - wwi_013 Germans soldiers surrender - provided |
| 00;01;24;10 |  | V1 | V14 - video - wwi_042 -A line of stretchers being brought in with casualties - provided |
| 00;01;28;29 |  | V1 | V15a - fx (fade in from white) |
| 00;01;29;14 |  | V1 | V15 -video - wwi_001 - A pan of the barren wasteland known as, 'no man's land - provided |
| 00;01;38;10 |  | V1 | v16 - still - canadian graves - provided |
| 00;01;48;01 |  | V1 | V16b - fx - (fade out to white) |
| 00;01;48;09 |  | V1 | V17a - still - muddy soldiers - provided |

| TC | Frame | Track | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|
| 00;01;58;08 |  | V1 | V17b - fx - zooms in |
| 00;01;58;16 |  | V1 | V18a - still - soldiers wave - provided |
| 00;02;07;28 |  | V1 | V18b - fx - zooms in |
| 00;02;08;11 |  | V1 | V19a - still - Your chums are fighting - provided |
| 00;02;12;26 |  | V1 | V19b - fx zoom out |
| 00;02;13;04 |  | V1 | V19c - fx fade to black |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total visual events - | 30 | Provided images - | 18 |
| Total shots - | 19 | Student Obtained - | 0 |
| Duration - | 00;02;15;06 | Titles - | 01 |
| Average shot - | 00;00;07;03 | Effects | 10 |
| Longest shot - | 00;00;10;00 | *Transition* | *06* |
| Shortest shot - | 00;00;03;03 | *Video* | *04* |
| | | Stills - | 08 |
| | | Videos - | 10 |

# APPENDIX H.

# Model of a Paper Edit/Script

| Narration | Image description and time |
|---|---|
| 1. It was a world war involving soldiers from around the world who were colonies or former colonies of the major European powers. However, most of the fighting, at least in the Western Front where Canada was involved, took place in a small area between the Belgian towns of Ypres and Passchendaele in the north and the French battle sites in the south at the Somme and Vimy Ridge. What was the war like? | -Animated title: World War I (5 sec)<br><br>Animated map of Western Front (10 sec.)<br><br>-Map of Vimy Ridge (7 sec) |
| 2. Most Canadians knew little of war beyond the heroic stories that they read in their school books. The government's propaganda posters used these mythic stories to encourage men to enlist in the army. The new Canadian army may use motorcycles, but it is in the tradition of the Medieval knights in the background. | - Still poster motor cyclist and Medieval knight (15 sec) |
| 3. The next poster also uses mythic images and symbols. The brave Canadian with his sword/bayonet slays the fire breathing monster, a black eagle, the symbol of Germany. | - Poster bayonet/eagle (12 sec) |
| 4. Most propaganda appealed to patriotism, duty to the country. | - Poster “wants you” (6 sec) |
| 5. In this poster, the young lions, symbolizing the countries of the British Empire like Canada, India, and Australia, come to the call of the old lion, Great | -Poster lions (13 sec) |

6. Duty, not just to the country but to the family, was another common theme: "Men, if you care for your woman and children, you should join the armed forces to protect them."

7. In these propaganda posters...

8. soldiers stood strong and tall.

9. The possibility of death was only suggested in silhouette. Some propaganda posters in their effort to encourage enlistment were even...

10. playful. But it was no game.

11. The machine gun meant that attacking soldiers suffered huge losses. Hundreds of thousands would die before

12. generals would admit the futility of a direct attack.

13. Artillery fire created a "no man's land"...

14. blasted by shells and strewn, with barbed wire, wreckage...

15. and corpses that separated two trench systems. The soldiers crouched in the trenches...

16. as hidden snipers waited to kill the unwary. Night was turned into day…

17. as soldiers worked feverishly after dark to rebuild trenches, collect food and ammunition…

18. or scout enemy lines. At dawn and dusk every…

19. stood at guard since these were the best times for attack. Then in daylight these exhausted men would be allowed a few hours of sleep. Rain and cold left soldiers soaked and shivering waiting for a ration of rum. Apart from their diluted…

- Poster woman at window (6 sec)

- Poster “Back him up” (2 sec)

- Poster “Be Ready” (2 sec)

- Poster “Thrust” (6 sec)

- Poster Uncle Sam (6 sec)

- Video machine gun (8 sec)

- Animated still photo (2 sec)

- Video artillery (2 sec)

- Animated still “no man’s land” (2 sec)

- Animated still corpse (5 sec)

- Animated still trench (5 sec)

- Animated still soldiers digging (5 sec)

- Animated still soldiers in trench (5 sec)

- Still soldiers resting (15 sec)