

CANADA IN HONG KONG: 1941 - 1945

THE FORGOTTEN HEROES

TEN SELECTED LESSON PLANS



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Hong Kong Veterans' Commemorative
Association of Canada

Ontario Region, HKVCA

Canada's "Forgotten Heroes" and the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association

The Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association was first proposed in 1996, when it became obvious that the Hong Kong Veterans themselves were finding it difficult to carry on with their own Association, for age and health reasons. It is comprised of the sons and daughters of the Canadian soldiers who fought at the Battle of Hong Kong in December of 1941, and its membership continues to grow as the word spreads, through relatives and friends and beyond, about the mission that the organization has set for itself.

The organization's first responsibility is, of course, to be of support to the Hong Kong veterans still living, and there are 207 across the country. This implies providing assistance to the veterans' families, as well as keeping in touch with widows of soldiers who died in the fighting, and those who died after they came home.

There are six Regional HKVCA organizations in Canada, from coast to coast, and each has objectives specific to their particular region. Nevertheless, they all share one goal. The veterans have been trying,

ever since they came back from overseas, to get reasonable compensation and a fair hearing, in terms of public understanding of what was involved in the Battle for Hong Kong, and how important a part of the Canadian participation in World War II it was. Most children in the schools understand what was involved in the attack on Pearl Harbor, but how many of them really know that 1,975 Canadian soldiers were part of that same series of attacks perpetrated in the Pacific on December 7, 1941? How many schoolchildren know that the first Canadian casualty of war was a Winnipeg Grenadier during the siege of Hong Kong? How many of the Canadian population realize that the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers who survived the 18-day siege of Hong Kong suffered through nearly four years of brutal treatment, starvation, slave labour and disease, and then were expected to come home, and take up where they had left off? In those years, psychological damage was not understood, nor were tropical diseases. The Hong Kong veterans who came home all suffered from both, and debilitating conditions lingered for years.

One of the most important tasks for the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association at this time is to ensure that Canadians all across this country are more aware of what the soldiers who went to Hong Kong endured, and the courage with which they faced their enemy in battle, and their captors in the prisoner-of-war camps for the duration of the war. The veterans themselves can tell the story, but it is important that the widest possible Canadian audience hear that story. Once they have the knowledge of what went on, they cannot help but be proud of the manner in which these Canadians acquitted themselves on the battlefield and in the prison camps which followed.

This is the reason that the Ontario Region of the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association felt compelled to arrange for the writing of a series of ten lessons for use in the schools of Ontario. It was thought that, perhaps for the first time, many young Canadians would begin to understand the important role these soldiers played at Hong Kong in exemplifying the very best that our country has to offer in terms of fortitude, determination and endurance.

We encourage the History teachers of Ontario to take advantage of the many possibilities to be found in these well-crafted lessons, prepared specifically for the students of this province by Mr. Nick Brune. Mr. Brune is at Iroquois High School in Oakville, Ontario, and is a 2002 recipient of the Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History. We are hopeful that the Ministry of Education will want to include these ten lessons in the Ontario Curriculum.



Pat Turcotte

Secretary, Ontario Region,
Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association



LESSON ONE

BACKGROUND TO CANADA'S ROLE IN THE DEFENCE OF HONG KONG

SUMMARY / OVERVIEW

This lesson is entirely optional and its inclusion depends on the teacher's judgement as well as time available. It focuses on the place of Hong Kong both within students' knowledge as well as its position within educational curricula. The theme of the lesson is to focus on the pervasive ignorance and indifference on the part of Canadians concerning Canada's role in Hong Kong during World War II as well as the exploration of possible reasons for that unfortunate situation. Finally, the lesson will investigate various means of rectifying the situation, and offer reasons why that should be done.

World War II officially began with the Nazi blitzkrieg ("lightning war") launched against Poland on September 1, 1939. In fact, war clouds had been on the horizon for most of the decade of the 1930s. After Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany (and shortly thereafter "Führer") in 1933, the Allies continued to practise a policy of appeasement. There were a series of acts of aggression on the part of the Third Reich: violating military restrictions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles, marching troops into the demilitarized Rhineland, the Anschluss ("annexation") of Austria, the Munich Treaty that ceded the Sudetenland (the north-western portion of Czechoslovakia), the takeover of the remainder of Czechoslovakia, and the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. The Allies met each with approval or acceptance, as they wanted to avoid another war at all costs. They had just fought the Great War a generation ago and their attention was more focused on attempting to deal with the domestic consequences of the Great Depression.

The War in the Pacific began with the Japanese bomb-



ing of the American 7th Fleet at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. (However, an argument could be made that the warning signs were already there. The League of Nations failed to respond to the 1931 Japanese incursion into Manchuria.) Calling it “a day that will live in infamy,” U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt declared war on Japan. Because Japan was allied with Germany and Italy (in the so-called “Axis of Fascism”), the conflict had now become a truly global one. Only a few hours after Pearl Harbor, Japan attacked the British colony of Hong Kong. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill did an amazing about-face. In January of 1941, he had counselled caution when it came to Hong Kong. “If Japan goes to war with us, there is not the slightest chance of holding Hong Kong or relieving it. It is most unwise to increase the loss we shall suffer there. Instead of increasing the garrison, it ought to be reduced....We must avoid frittering away our resources on untenable positions.”

Cabinet colleagues and military advisors persuaded Churchill that Hong Kong’s strategic importance necessitated an increased military presence. Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King agreed without questioning the wisdom of that judgement, and despatched 1,975 soldiers, who arrived in Hong Kong on November 16, 1941. Those troops, some as young as sixteen, all came from the Winnipeg Grenadiers and the Royal Rifles of Canada. Both had been on garrison duty, the former in Jamaica, and the latter in Newfoundland. Neither had been properly trained for a combat role, and once in Hong Kong, they had barely three weeks to prepare for battle. Their heavy transport, and much of their other equipment sent on another ship, never arrived.

Despite making a courageous stand against overwhelming odds, after eighteen days of fierce fighting, they surrendered on Christmas Day, 1941. The Canadian losses were heavy: 290 killed, 493 wounded, and the remainder all taken prisoner. The survivors were forced to endure brutal conditions in Japanese POW camps for the duration of the war. They were used as slave labour in coalmines and shipyards. Some were tortured; some badly beaten; some murdered outright. All suffered from completely inadequate food and medical care. Not surprisingly, 264 died in those appalling camps and those that did make it home, looking like skeletons, endured serious medical and physical afflictions for the rest of their lives.

Subsequent demands on their behalf for a formal apol-

ogy and compensation from the Japanese government have fallen on deaf ears. They had been the first to fight and the last to return home. Yet, they were scarcely greeted as returning heroes. They have, over more than the last half-century, been largely forgotten by the government and the people they served. The Canadian government waited until just a few years ago to compensate them for the suffering they endured. Further, writers and educational curriculum implementers have largely ignored their story. Many history textbooks avoid the topic altogether. Others give it scant coverage. As a result, the overwhelming majority of students are woefully ignorant of this important chapter in Canadian history.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- to focus on the lack of knowledge about Canada’s role in Hong Kong, 1941-1945
- to explore reasons for this lack of knowledge and indifference to Canada’s role in Hong Kong, 1941-1945
- to investigate the consequences and repercussions of Canadian ignorance and indifference regarding Hong Kong, 1941-1945
- to increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of Canada’s role in Hong Kong, 1941-1945
- to raise sensitivity about the important role that history and historians have in carrying on a nation’s collective memory
- to provide an overview of major Canadian military engagements
- to help students improve their listening and speaking skills
- to explore reasons why some aspects of history are known while others are unknown, and the significance of that knowledge and ignorance

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

1. Have the students compile a Top Ten List. This list is to be of Canada’s most important military engagements, conflicts, or confrontations. Students should do this three times. The first time, they should compile their own personal list. It can be based on general knowledge or assigned research. The second time they should be put in groups of three and instructed to arrive at a group consensus. They must listen and



debate what their group's Top Ten List is going to be. Then, thirdly, each group should report its group consensus and the teacher scores the result on the board. (Each time a group ranks a battle or engagement as #1, it receives 10 points; as #2 nine points, etc.) This point system will help decide the Top Ten List to be used in Step 2.

2. Examine the ten choices that made the class consensus list. (Likely choices would include: Plains of Abraham, Queenston Heights, Ypres, Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele, the Somme, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Ortona, D-Day, Oka.) At this point, a series of questions could be asked about the list. They might include the following:

- What are the criteria for "top" military engagement?
- From what time period do most of the choices come?
Can you suggest reasons why that might be the case?
- Can you identify any biases that appear in the list?
- What are the difficulties in compiling such a list?

3. Ask, "Are there any important battles or confrontations that appear to be missing from the list?" (Possible suggestions might include: Louisbourg, Sainte-Foy, Chateauguay, Beaver Dam, Moraviantown, St. Eustache.)

4. If Hong Kong, 1941-1945 does not emerge from #3 above, then advance it as a candidate.

5. At this point, students should be provided with a

brief overview of the Battle of Hong Kong, either by way of a reading from their textbook (if it provides anything), and/or the relevant section of the McKennas' book based on their TV documentary, *The Valour and the Horror*. A very worthwhile source is pp.58-61 in "Human Rights in the Pacific 1931-1945", the B.C. Resource Booklet containing an excerpt from that film.

6. After the students have familiarized themselves with the outlines of the story of Hong Kong, have them answer the following: What are the significant aspects of Hong Kong that make it a deserving candidate for inclusion in a Top Ten list? (Elements might include the following: the "first in last out" aspect, the questionable decision-making behind the commitment of Canadian troops; the horror of the POW camps; the lack of recognition on the part of the public, government, and history; etc.)

7. Ask the following question: What might be some reasons why the Canadian role in Hong Kong has largely been ignored (lack of media attention, not in included educational curricula, lack of coverage in school texts, reluctance of Hong Kong veterans to draw attention to themselves, other "more worthy" candidates, etc.)?

8. What suggestions can you offer to help rectify this situation? (Get Ministries of Education to include in [mandated] curriculum, have students study it, research it, invite in a Hong Kong veteran into the class, write letters to the editor, etc.)



LESSON TWO

THE COMING OF WORLD WAR II

SUMMARY / OVERVIEW

This lesson puts the story of Canada's involvement into the larger context of World War II itself. Logically, it makes sense to have students know exactly how and why World War II came about. That story, in and of itself, is amazing enough given the fact that the Great War had been fought just a generation earlier. The overwhelming aim of world leaders of the 1920s and 1930s was to avoid another such global conflict. Nevertheless, much of what they did, and the consequence of many of their decisions, led to the very result that they wished so desperately to avoid. This lesson examines the steps that led to this most tragic consequence. More significantly, the lesson also analyzes reasons for some of those fateful decisions and ultimately focuses on the central question, "Could World War II have been avoided?"

(Note: There will be some unavoidable overlap between parts of Lesson One and Lesson Two. This is intentional for a couple of explicit reasons. One, many teachers may choose not to do Lesson One so without this overlap, their students would miss out on vital information. Secondly, even in those instances when both lessons are covered, the element of reinforcement might be viewed as beneficial, as it should lead to greater understanding.)

World War II officially began with the Nazi blitzkrieg ("lightning war") launched against Poland on September 1, 1939. However, war clouds had been on the horizon for most of the decade of the 1930s. Ironically, a strong case can be made for the fact that the Treaty of Versailles (1919) that ended World War I contained the seeds for World War II. The Treaty's harsh and vindictive terms - eliminating Germany's



navy and air force, limiting its armed forces, stripping it of its colonies, and forcing it to pay massive reparations because of the War Guilt Clause – threw Weimar Germany into political and economic instability. The combination of trying to finance World War I and pay \$242 billion in reparations led to runaway inflation at the beginning of the 1920s in Germany. Unemployment and depression followed at the end of the decade. The German people looked to a leader to solve their economic crises as well as one who would restore their lost national honour and pride.

The Allies studiously practised a policy of appeasement. They had just fought the Great War a generation before, and their attention was more focused on attempting to deal with the domestic consequences of the Great Depression. They had already indicated that stance with their lack of response to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. They confirmed it two years later when, once again, they acquiesced in fascist Italian leader Benito Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia.

After Hitler became Chancellor of Germany (and shortly thereafter "Führer") in 1933, he implemented a policy of incremental aggression. Confident of the lack of resolve on the part of the Allies, he embarked on a series of offensive acts. Almost immediately, he violated terms of the Versailles Treaty by expanding the German armed forces and building up armaments industries. In 1936, he marched troops into the demilitarized Rhineland, again in express violation of the Treaty of Versailles. In March 1938, without a single shot being fired, the Anschluss ("annexation") of Austria took place. With the Munich Treaty, the Allies handed over the Sudetenland (the northwestern portion of Czechoslovakia) to Hitler. One year later, Nazi troops occupied the remainder of Czechoslovakia. In October of 1938, the Rome-Berlin Axis Pact was signed (and two years later, Japan joined the "Axis of Fascism"). Finally, in August 1939, just days before the Nazi invasion of Poland, Germany and the Soviet Union, bitter ideological enemies, concluded the Non-Aggression Pact.

Canada's declaration of war this time was very different than it had been twenty-five years earlier prior to World War I. On that earlier occasion, when Britain declared war on the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austro-Hungary, and Italy) in early August 1914, Canada was automatically at war. As Britain at that time still deter-

mined Canadian foreign policy, there was no debate or vote in the Canadian House of Commons about entry into the Great War. The Canadian entry into World War II was very different. Whereas Britain and France declared war on Nazi Germany on September 3, 1939, Canada waited a full week, allowing time for a full Parliamentary debate and vote before announcing its own declaration.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- to help students develop a chronological sense of the coming of World War II
- to have students gain an appreciation of causes and decisions that helped bring the world to war for a second time within a generation
- to provide the necessary historical context for understanding Canada's involvement in Hong Kong, 1941-1945 to understand and appreciate the lesson of history regarding appeasement and recognize where and when it was subsequently applied
- to understand and appreciate the lesson of history regarding appeasement and recognize where and when it was subsequently applied
- to have students acquire knowledge and insight as to what happened, why it happened, and the significance of it happening with regard to the coming of World War II

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

1. Select six to ten of the more significant terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Distribute them to groups of three students and have them analyze what the terms meant and what impact they might have in the post-war period.
2. Give each group ten to fifteen minutes to deliberate. They should nominate a recorder whose task it is to write down the group's findings. In addition, a presenter should also be chosen within each group who will briefly summarize the group's conclusions to the class.
3. Brief debate. (Done either as a class or in groups of three.) Debate the following resolution: Resolved that the peace of World War I led to the outbreak of World War II. Allow fifteen minutes.



4. Again the class should be broken into groups of three or four students. (They can either be the same groups as earlier or reconstituted groups.) Each group has the same task. Given a number of different causes of the coming of World War II, they are to put them into chronological order. Depending on the wishes of the teacher, they can have access to their own pooled knowledge, logical deduction, textbook, or the Internet.

5. Each group should record its list of causes either on the board or flip-chart paper.

6. Conduct a class discussion about the correct historical order.

7. Reassemble the groups and have them address the following questions:

- a. Which event was the single most important one in helping to bring on World War II? Why?
- b. What role did human error play in bringing on World War II?
- c. We know that appeasement failed. Why did it look, at the time, like the wisest policy? And why did it fail?
- d. Was World War II bound to happen? Was it inevitable?

8. Homework: The Legacy of Appeasement. Identify other instances in which the great historical lesson of "appeasement doesn't work" has been applied.



LESSON THREE

***THE VALOUR AND THE HORROR –* "A SAVAGE CHRISTMAS: THE FALL OF HONG KONG"**

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1990s, two award-winning Canadian documentary filmmakers, Terrence and Brian McKenna, made a controversial three-part, six-hour series for television entitled *The Valour and the Horror*. It produced an immediate sensation, and an equally quick reaction. Supporters praised it as groundbreaking, refreshing, and engaging. Opponents called it poor history, bad revisionism, and extremely judgmental. Hundreds of letters to the editor, calls to on-line shows, opinion pieces, and finally a Senate subcommittee investigation, reflected the storm of controversy. There appeared to be little middle ground. Either the McKennas' indictment of the conduct of the Canadian government and the military in the Second World War situations they chronicled was tragically accurate, or it was grossly exaggerated.

In an interesting parallel, it was the second part of the documentary, "Bomber Command: Death By Midnight," dealing with the Allied bombing of German cities, that produced the most strident arguments. The third piece on Canadians in Hong Kong called "A Savage Christmas: The Fall of Hong Kong" was, by comparison, largely ignored. The lack of response seemed to mirror the Canadian attitude to the entire Pacific situation.

However, the Hong Kong story should not be ignored. This riveting account of what transpired in Hong Kong between 1941 and 1945 is deserving of all Canadians' complete attention. Mixing the words from journals, diaries, and letters with archival shots, as well as reenactments, the McKennas recount a story of political expediency, military incompetence, and tragic indifference. Much of "A Savage Christmas: The Fall of



Hong Kong" follows the return to Hong Kong and Japan of two veterans, Bob Clayton and Bob Manchester, after more than fifty years have passed. Viewers are captured by their telling of warmly human stories of courage and bravery. Against the background of incompetence and expediency at the top, viewers are made aware of profoundly moving tales of heroism and sacrifice.

While the McKennas may not have given us the complete truth about Hong Kong, arguably they have

moved us a great deal closer to that elusive point. They have also destroyed what can accurately be called "a conspiracy of silence" that has surrounded Canada's participation in the defence of Hong Kong. The story of individual commitment and sacrifice in the face of highly dubious decision-making is as poignant as it is universal. The ultimate tragedy may well be that so few Canadians know about it. We owe it to those Canadians who endured Hong Kong to learn and "never forget" what happened there. And to understand – and apply – its lessons.



Yokohama British Commonwealth War Cemetery. Robert "Flash" Clayton and Bob Manchester are looking at the grave of L-Sgt. Murray T. Goodenough, RRC, who died in prison camp at the age of 18 in 1943. He was the youngest soldier in the cemetery, having fought in the battle of Hong Kong at age 16.



COMPREHENSION AND RECALL

1. The total number of Canadian lives lost in Hong Kong was _____.
2. The British prime minister at the time was _____.
3. _____ changed the British prime minister's mind to conclude that it was worthwhile to provide at least a symbolic defense of Hong Kong.
4. The first Canadian troops designated for Hong Kong duty were _____.
5. The Canadian Prime Minister at the time was _____.
6. The Canadian government officially designated these troops as "unfit for combat" because _____.
7. The second battalion, soon added, with the same designation, was _____.
8. The number of troops to be sent to Hong Kong was _____.
9. The number of nursing sisters sent with the contingent was _____.
10. The voyage from Vancouver to Hong Kong lasted _____.
11. The date the Canadian contingent arrived in Hong Kong was _____.
12. The population of the colony had swollen to two million because of _____.
13. The principal city on the island was _____, and on the mainland, _____.
14. The main line of defense between the advancing Japanese forces and the defending troops on the mainland was _____.
15. Despite estimates that the number of Japanese troops was no more than 5,000, the real number of attackers was at least _____.
16. The incident that occurred at 7:50 a.m. on December 7, 1941 was _____.
17. The other sites, often overlooked or forgotten, which were also attacked in the hours immediately following that first attack were _____, _____, and _____.
18. The Gin Drinkers' Line was supposed to hold out for weeks. The Japanese Forces captured it within _____.
19. The first Canadian infantryman to die in combat on the ground in the Second World War was _____ of the _____ Battalion. The circumstances surrounding his death included _____.
20. The name of the narrowest passage between the mainland occupied by the Japanese and the island held by the defenders was _____.
21. The date that the Japanese first crossed over to Hong Kong island was _____.
22. The number of Japanese who invaded the island in the first assault was _____.
23. For his bravery at the Battle of Wong Nei Chong Gap, Canada's highest military honour, the Victoria Cross was won by _____.
24. The evidence that UN investigators found after the war confirmed what had taken place immediately after the surrender. What was that evidence?
25. The most shocking massacre during the siege of Hong Kong took place at _____.
26. The official surrender of Hong Kong took place at _____ (time) on _____ Day, _____ (year).
27. The nickname of the notorious Japanese guard, born in Canada, who committed numerous atrocities was _____.
28. List at least six of the conditions that made life in the POW camps inhumane. _____
29. The epidemic that deepened the tragedy in camp was _____. It killed a total of _____ men.
30. Name three types of projects the POW's in the various camps had to work on. _____



ANSWERS TO THE COMPREHENSION AND RECALL SECTION

1. The number of Canadian lives lost was 554.
2. The British prime minister at the time was Winston Churchill.
3. British military advisors changed the British prime minister's mind to conclude that it was worth making at least a symbolic defense of Hong Kong.
4. The first Canadian troops designated for Hong Kong duty were the Winnipeg Grenadiers.
5. The Canadian prime minister at the time was William Lyon Mackenzie King.
6. The Canadian government officially designated the Winnipeg Grenadiers as "unfit for combat" because of their lack of training.
7. The name of the second battalion chosen to join the Winnipeg Grenadiers was the Royal Rifles of Canada.
8. *The Valour and the Horror* documentary says 2,000, but it was actually 1,975 troops that were sent to Hong Kong.
9. There were two nursing sisters sent with the contingent although *The Valour and the Horror* says three.
10. The ocean voyage from Vancouver to Hong Kong took three weeks.
11. The Canadians arrived in Hong Kong on November 16, 1941.
12. Chinese refugees fleeing the Japanese advance had caused the population of the colony to swell to two million people.
13. The principal city on the island of Hong Kong was Victoria. The principal city on the mainland was Kowloon.
14. The main line of defense between the advancing Japanese forces and the British and Canadian troops was the Gin Drinkers' Line.
15. Despite estimates that there were only 5,000 Japanese troops threatening Hong Kong, there were in fact 50,000.
16. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had occurred at 7:50 a.m. on December 7, 1941.
17. The other sites that were also attacked in the hours immediately after Pearl Harbor were the Philippines, Malaya, and Hong Kong.
18. The Gin Drinkers' Line was supposed to hold out for weeks, but the Japanese forces captured it in just a few hours.
19. The first Canadian infantryman to die in combat in the Second World War was John Gray of the Winnipeg Grenadiers. He was a 21-year-old farm boy who missed the last boat leaving the mainland. He was captured by the Japanese and executed.
20. The narrowest passage between the mainland occupied by the Japanese and the island held by Commonwealth troops was Lye Mun Passage.
21. The Japanese crossed over to the island on December 18, 1941, after five days of bombardment.
22. In the first major assault on the island, the invasion force numbered 7,500.
23. John Osborn won the Victoria Cross, Canada's highest military honour, for his bravery at the Battle of Wong Nei Chong Gap.
24. After the war, investigators discovered evidence that confirmed Japanese atrocities, that is, the murder of wounded prisoners, had taken place immediately after the surrender.
25. The most shocking massacre to take place during the siege of Hong Kong was at St. Stephen's Hospital.
26. The official surrender of Hong Kong took place at 3 p.m. on Christmas Day, 1941.
27. The nickname of the notorious Japanese guard, born in Canada, who committed numerous atrocities was the Kamloops Kid.
28. Some of the conditions that made living in the POW camps inhumane included a rice-only diet, lack of medical care, theft of Red Cross packages, hard labour, diseases, beatings, and murders.
29. The epidemic that deepened the tragedy in the camps was diphtheria. The number of Canadians who died from it was 108.
30. The projects the POWs were forced to work on included the Kai Tak airport runway in Hong Kong, and coal mines and shipyards in Japan.



THINKING

1. Put yourself in the position of the two returning veterans, Bob "Flash" Clayton and Bob Manchester, portrayed in the documentary. What feelings and emotions would they be going through? Why would their return be difficult?
2. "They look at stones; we look at people." (Bob Clayton) What is the important idea being conveyed?
3. Why did the British government decide to ask for Canadian troops rather than dispatching British troops for the defense of Hong Kong?
4. Can you suggest reasons why Canada never made "an independent investigation of the peril" prior to deciding to commit Canadian troops?
5. Suggest reasons for the British supreme overconfidence regarding the fighting abilities of the Japanese troops.
6. Put yourself in Bob Clayton's shoes. What would you say to Lieutenant Scott, the man who saved you, if you were able to meet him later in life?
7. Why could it be rightly argued that the surviving POWs would come to envy the dead?
8. Should the Japanese government and businesses, guilty of war crimes and war profiteering, compensate their Canadian victims? Justify your position with supporting evidence.
9. Would you have attended the reunion dinner between the two Canadian Hong Kong veterans and Japanese soldiers depicted in the documentary? Why, or why not?
10. How did Canadian POWs view the dropping of the atomic bombs? Why?

DISCUSSION

1. What evidence is there to support the claim made at the outset of the documentary that for Canada, Hong Kong constituted "an impossible mission"?
2. Why is Hong Kong "one of the darkest stories in Canadian military history"?
3. Were 2000 Canadian young men "offered as a lambs for the slaughter for some political expediency"?
4. Explain the significance of the title "A Savage Christmas: The Fall of Hong Kong."
5. Why do you think the Japanese authorities withheld needed medical supplies?
6. Why was the Japanese POW death rate six times higher than German POW camps?
7. What are the Geneva Accords? Did Japan violate them? If they did, what should the consequences be?
8. Japanese and Canadian soldiers appear to have very different versions of the truth. Suggest reasons for that situation.
9. Why do you think that the Canadian government, in 1992, without the permission or knowledge of the Hong Kong veterans, absolved the Japanese of any guilt, responsibility, or blame in their actions in Hong Kong between 1941 and 1945?
10. Identify the bias in the McKennas' documentary "A Savage Christmas: The Fall of Hong Kong" and provide a minimum of six examples when that bias is shown.



LESSON FOUR

START OF THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC

SUMMARY / OVERVIEW

This lesson focuses on how the war in the Pacific began as well as beginning to explore the role that Hong Kong played within that theatre. Students will examine a variety of related topics: the rise of Emperor Hirohito, the invasion into Manchuria, the ineffectiveness of the League of Nations, the growing ascendancy of the army within Japanese politics, the perceived Japanese need to establish a “firm position” within the Asiatic continent, the significance played by oil, the decision to strike at Pearl Harbor, and the strategic importance of Hong Kong.

Unfortunately, textbooks and courses often give scant and superficial coverage of the Pacific theatre of World War II. Rather, the coverage is concentrated on Europe: the rise of Hitler, the failure of appeasement, the Battle of Britain, the Battle of the Atlantic, the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, D-Day, and the like. The war in the Pacific is treated largely as an auxiliary to the main event being played out in Europe. If any coverage is provided it usually is a mention of “the day that will live in infamy” (the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor) and/or an examination of the American decision to drop the two atomic bombs on Japan in August of 1945. This is both unfortunate and shortsighted. The war in the Pacific, within the larger context of World War II, has its own intrinsic importance. It brought the United States into the war, making World War II a truly global conflict. It produced Pearl Harbor, the American “island hopping” campaign, the firebombing of Japanese cities, and the internment of Japanese-Americans and Canadians. Obviously, it also ushered in the modern nuclear age and made Hiroshima and Nagasaki defining events of the twentieth century. And finally, the war in the Pacific resulted in the tragedy that was Hong Kong.



Thus, in order for students to understand “the bigger picture” as well as to diminish their Western bias and perspective, an examination of the Pacific theatre of World War II is essential. Without such an analysis, the understanding of the war is incomplete. Also, knowing something of that area and background helps set the story of Hong Kong into a more meaningful context.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- to have students gain an understanding of the chronology of the war in the Pacific
- to have students gain insight into cause and effect
- to refine research techniques
- to have students analyze the motivations behind Japanese actions prior to 1941
- to have students understand how the war in the Pacific dovetails with the European war within WW II
- to broaden students’ perspective and lessen their biases
- to develop students’ listening, presenting, and debating skills

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

Divide students into groups of three.

1. Provide each group with individual strips of paper which list seventeen of the major events (without dates) in the Asia-Pacific War. (See RESOURCE for the correct order of events).
2. Each group should be instructed to try to place the events in the correct chronological order. Give approximately fifteen minutes for this task.
3. Put the class back together and go through the correct chronological order. As the events are put in their correct order, provide further information about the events, either through question-and-answer or through thumbnail sketches photocopied and distributed.
4. Map analysis. Distribute a copy of a map that reflects the information provided by the Timeline. (page 51 of the BC Unit has an appropriate one.) Questions might include the following: What are the geographic advantages of the Japanese location? What are potential disadvantages? What areas would be attractive to Japan?

Why? Why might Japan be interested in Hong Kong?

6. Debate. Resolution - Be it resolved that the outbreak of the war in the Pacific was inevitable. This debate could either be conducted as a full class debate or in triads (a person for, a person against, and a person acting as judge.)

7. An alternative activity to the debate would be a research and brief presentation activity. If this was chosen, divide the class into teams of two and assign them one of the seventeen events in the Timeline. Their task is to research it (what it was and how it helped bring on the war in the Pacific) and then provide a brief (three to five minute) presentation to the class. This option will clearly take more time but would provide students with not only greater knowledge and understanding but also further refine and polished research and presentation skills.

8. Discussion/Homework/Research questions.

DISCUSSION/HOMEWORK/RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Why did Japan embark on an aggressive policy of foreign invasion and annexation?
2. Why did the League of Nations remain powerless in the face of Japanese aggression in the Far East?
3. Did the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor make sense (from a Japanese perspective)? Why, or why not? Provide supporting historical evidence.
4. A central debate surrounding the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor is whether or not the United States knew of the attack before it took place. Research both sides of the debate and decide which has the stronger position.
5. Research the place of oil in the thinking behind the Japanese policy.
6. Research the increasingly important role played by the Japanese Army within Japanese decision and policymaking.
7. Why did Japan join the Axis of Fascism?
8. Which country, Russia, China, Britain, or the United States was best situated to stop the Japanese expansionist drive? Explain and defend your choice by providing evidence.



9. Could the outbreak of the war in the Pacific have been avoided? Why, or why not? At what point would that possibility have been the greatest? Explain.

10. Why do North American curriculum and textbooks concentrate on the European rather than the Pacific theatre of World War II?

RESOURCE

Timeline of Major Events of the Asia-Pacific War and the History of Hong Kong

1842

By the Treaty of Nanking, China first cedes island and peninsula of Hong Kong.

1843

By Royal Charter, Hong Kong becomes a separate British colony.

1895

Shimonoseki Treaty. After its defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, China cedes Taiwan to Japan.

1898

New Territories area is leased to Britain for ninety-nine years.

1905

Japan defeats Russia in the Russo-Japanese War. The Treaty of Portsmouth forces Russia to give up its claim in southern Manchuria to Japan, and recognizes Japan as the dominant power in Korea.

1910

Japan "officially" annexes Korea.

1926

Hirohito, after five years as regent, becomes the 124th Emperor of Japan.

1931

The Japanese army launches an invasion of Manchuria.

1932

The Japanese army seizes Manchuria and establishes the puppet state of Manchukuo.

1933

After the League of Nations declares that Manchukuo is

not a legitimate state, Japan withdraws from the League. Japan keeps its troops in Manchuria and expands its control in the area by gaining control of much of North China.

1936

The Japanese Army gains ascendancy in Japanese political life.

1937

After the "Marco Polo Bridge Incident," Japan launches an invasion of China. Japan captures Peking (now Beijing) and Shanghai. After the capital of Nanking (now Nanjing) falls, the Japanese military commits the Nanking Massacre.

1939

World War II begins in Europe with the Nazi blitzkrieg of Poland.

1940

Japan moves into northern Indo-China (now Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia). Japan joins the Axis Alliance with Germany and Italy.

1941

Tojo Hideki becomes prime minister of Japan. Canada agrees with the British assessment of Hong Kong's strategic importance and agrees to send 1,975 troops that arrive on November 16. On December 7, Japan raids Pearl Harbor. Simultaneously, Malaya, Philippines, and Hong Kong are attacked. After seventeen days of fighting, Hong Kong is surrendered to Japan. Of the 1,975 Canadian troops, 290 are killed in action while 1,685 are captured and interned in POW camps. Two hundred and sixty-four die in internment.

1942

By mid-year, Japan has gained control over much of southeast Asia including Hong Kong, Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, Malaya (now Singapore and Malaysia, and Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia).

1945

The first atomic bomb is dropped on Hiroshima on August 6. The Soviet Union declares war on Japan on August 8 (as agreed to by the Potsdam Treaty that ended the war in Europe). The second atomic bomb is dropped on Nagasaki on August 9. With Japan's surrender on August 15, World War II ends.



LESSON FIVE

THE FATEFUL CANADIAN DECISION

SUMMARY / OVERVIEW

Governments make a multitude of decisions in both wartime and peacetime. Those decisions, some brilliant and innovative, others faulty and ill-considered, are arrived at for a host of different reasons by people of influence and power. Without a doubt, decisions made in the course of a war are far more significant in that matters of life and death are involved. Relative to the average citizen, the individuals making those decisions have access to more information, but they do not always have more intelligence. Their decisions can be right or wrong depending on the costs, benefits, consequences, and repercussions of the decision. To be assessed fairly, they must be viewed in light of what the decision makers themselves knew then, not what we know now. Hindsight is indeed 20/20.

However, the Canadian government's decision in the fall of 1941 to agree to Britain's request for Canadian troops to bolster Hong Kong defences was not only naive, but ill-conceived, and little short of disastrous. Today, this decision produces very polar views. On the one hand, there is the more traditional interpretation of C.P. Stacey and J.L. Granatstein that the decision was the best one, given the military and political difficulties under which Canada operated. At the other extreme, people such as Brian and Terrence McKenna and Carl Vincent argue that it was a decision of negligence and incompetence. This lesson will examine that decision, the way in which it was made, the possible motives behind the decision, and the initial consequences of the decision. Students involving themselves in the process will begin to appreciate and understand the decision-making model.

Within six months, British Prime Minister Winston



Churchill's opinion on this issue completely reversed. At the beginning of 1941, he was adamantly opposed to sending more troops to reinforce the garrison at Hong Kong. He argued that to do so was complete folly, and that if Japan went to war with Britain, there "[would] not [be] the slightest chance of holding Hong Kong or relieving it." However, the British War Office convinced Churchill to alter his thinking. Further, arguing that British troops were too precious to spare, on September 19 Britain formally requested that Canada send "one or two" battalions to Hong Kong to support the British battalions garrisoned there.

Canadian authorities, naively accepted this reversal of British policy in good faith. Nothing in the way of independent investigation was done. No one questioned or challenged the new orthodoxy. Canada simply went along with the British request. To make a bad situation worse, Canada implemented the decision with far too much haste and too little thought. The troops chosen were ill-prepared and minimally trained. Some did not even know how to fire a gun. Their transport and other essential equipment, through bureaucratic incompetence, never arrived.

The tragedy of the Canadian decision to commit troops to Hong Kong in 1941 will be multiplied if succeeding generations fail to learn how it came about. That it was wrong goes without saying, and hardly needs to be debated. However, we must understand how the decision was made, and thus be on guard should something like this happen again. George Santayana's often-quoted maxim about history applies with devastating force in this situation. "Those who forget their history are fated to repeat the mistakes of the past."

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- to have students understand how the decision to commit Canadian troops to Hong Kong came about
- to have students understand the chronology involved in the decision
- to have students appreciate the cause and effect behind the decision
- to have students role-play the decision so as to increase both their understanding and their degree of empathy
- to have students understand the decision-making model
- to have students analyze motives behind historical decisions

- to have students abstract ideas into headline form
- to have students work with and understand both the usefulness and the limitations of primary sources
- to analyze the difference between primary and secondary sources in history

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

1. Form groups of three or four students. Distribute one of the primary source quotes (Reference #1) to each group, and have them analyze it. Who is the source? What is he saying? What evidence, if any, is provided to support the stated view? Can you detect a bias?
2. Reconvene the class and do a brief analysis of primary and secondary sources in history. Provide a definition of each (primary – recorded at a time contemporary to, or almost contemporary to, the event to which it is related; secondary – a source of evidence about an event, person, or issue that is recorded after the passage of time). Provide examples of each (primary – diary, journal, letters, speeches, documents, artifacts, autobiography, newspaper account, interview, etc.; secondary – textbook, encyclopaedia, etc.). Then have students do a cost-benefit analysis of each type of source (i.e., What are the advantages and disadvantages of each type of source? Include such factors as bias, availability, reliability, accuracy, etc.).
3. Distribute the timeline of thirty-six events involved in the decision to commit Canadian troops. Refer to Resource One. [Note: This could constitute an entire lesson unto itself.]
4. Instruct students that in groups of three, they should construct a "Critical Path." Each group should develop its own timeline of the six to ten most essential moments in the decision. In addition, the group should compose newspaper headlines of a minimum of twelve of the events (including the six to ten chosen as most critical).
5. As they are completing Task 2, have them address the following question: At what stages could (or should) the decision have been changed? Why? What was the most logical stage? Why?
6. Form groups of five or six. Assign roles to each member (prime minister, defense, external affairs, chief of staff, etc.). The task is to debate the merits of



sending troops to Hong Kong. Examine the possible consequences, alternatives, questions that might be offered to the British, etc.

7. Decision-Making Model. All important decisions need to be broken down. Working in the original group of three, students should make a chronological list of the significant questions that lay behind the decision to commit Canadian troops.

8. On the board, take up what those questions might have been. For example,

- Should troops be sent?
- What would the consequences be if Canada refused the British request?
- What situation would the Canadian troops find themselves in if the decision was to go along with the British request?
- When should the troops be sent?
- How many troops should be sent?
- What kind of troops should be sent? What troops are the best choices?
- What kind of training should those troops receive?
- What are the benefits – and costs – of sending troops?

9. Significances of the Decision-Making Model. As a class, ask the students what significant conclusions, generally speaking, can be obtained from the Decision-Making Model? Possible answers should be recorded on the board. For example,

- Normally, options exist.
- Alternatives should be examined.
- As much information as possible should be obtained.
- Options should be examined in light of possible costs and benefits.
- Nothing should be accepted on naive faith.
- Questions should always be asked.

[Note: Again, this Decision-Making Model could constitute a separate lesson unto itself.]

THOUGHT, DISCUSSION, RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What do you believe was Prime Minister Mackenzie King's chief motivation behind the decision to commit troops? Did he follow the Decision-Making Model? If not, what steps did he omit?

2. The Prime Minister is often referred to as *primus inter pares* (Latin for first among equals) in terms of his relationship within the cabinet. Do you think that label applies within the context of the decision to commit Canadian troops to Hong Kong? Why, or why not?

3. Since that time, there have been numerous charges of incompetence regarding the decision. What specific examples can you find to support that notion?

4. Pierre Berton, arguably Canada's greatest historical writer, claims that the decision was a "travesty" and "a blatantly foolish enterprise." Do you agree with him? Why, or why not?

5. What protections could have been put in place to lessen the possibility of a future governmental blunder of this nature?

6. If you were a surviving Hong Kong veteran today, how would you feel about the Canadian decision? How would you feel about the Canadian government? The Canadian military?

7. Write a letter to the editor about the decision. How would that letter be different if it had have been written fifty-five years ago?

8. If someone within the government was proven to have acted incompetently in this decision, what should the consequences be? Explain.

9. What is the most effective and fair way to examine alleged government errors? Explain.

10. Is it justified to demand a higher form of accountability – and accuracy – of government officials? Why, or why not?

11. What do you believe is the chief lesson to be learned from the decision to send Canadian troops to Hong Kong?

12. Which type of source, primary or secondary, do you think is more biased? Why? Which is more reliable? Why?

REFERENCES – PRIMARY SOURCES AND TIMELINE

Primary Sources

A/ ' "10. As you know, these units returned not long



ago from duty in Newfoundland and Jamaica respectively. The duties which they there carried out were not in many respects unlike the task which awaits the units to be sent to Hong Kong. The experience they have will therefore be of no small value to them in their new role. Both units are of proven efficiency.

11. In my opinion, the balance of argument favours the selection of these two units....The selection represents both Eastern and Western Canada. In the case of the Royal Rifles, there is also the fact that this battalion, while nominally English-speaking, is actually drawn from a region overwhelmingly French-speaking in character and contains an important proportion of Canadians of French descent." ' (Vincent 1981, 46)

B/ September 19, 1941 telegram from Dominions Office to the Canadian government via the Department of External Affairs:

' "No. 162 MOST SECRET

In consultation with late General Officer Commanding [General Grasset] who has recently arrived in this country we have been considering the defences of Hong Kong. Approved policy has been that Hong Kong should be regarded as an out-post and held as long as possible in the event of war in the Far East. Existing army garrison consists of four battalions of infantry and

although this force represents the bare minimum required for the task assigned to it we have thought hitherto that it would not ultimately serve any useful purpose to increase the garrison.

Position in the Far East has now, however, changed. Our defences in Malaya have been improved and there have been signs of a certain weakening in Japan's attitude towards us and the United States.

In these circumstances it is thought that a small reinforcement of the garrison of Hong Kong, e.g. by one or two more battalions, would be very fully justified. It would increase the strength of the garrison out of all proportion to the actual numbers involved and it would provide a strong stimulus to the garrison and to the Colony, it would further have a very great moral effect in the whole of the Far East, and it would reassure Chaing Kai Shek as to the reality of our intention to hold the island.

His Majesty's Government in Canada will be well aware of the difficulties we are at present experiencing in providing the forces which the situation in various parts of the world demands, despite the very great assistance which is being furnished by the Dominions. We should therefore be most grateful if the Canadian government would consider whether one or two Canadian battalions could be provided from Canada for this purpose. It would be of the greatest help if the Canadian Government would cooperate with us in the manner suggested and we much hope that they will feel able to do so." ' (Vincent 1981, 29)



The ship on which most of "C" Force sailed, the Awatea, calls at Manila enroute to Hong Kong. (PAC PA116288)



C/ King – September 5, 1941 – “The Government should have much clearer information than is yet available of the war operations planned or intended by the British and Allied governments. It is not enough to simply get suggestions from the British as to what Canadian action would be most effective without at the same time having the information in question, so that the Canadian government can form their own judgement whether the Canadian action suggested would in reality be the most effective.” (Vincent 1981, 31)

D/ Mackenzie King’s prime concern in the decision was the issue of conscription – “It must be clearly understood that the troops were available and that this further commitment would not contribute to the creation of conditions which would make conscription for overseas service necessary in order to meet our obligations.”

E/ King, writing in 1948, sanitized his involvement in the decision – “[I] strenuously opposed sending troops to cross the Pacific.” As Berton writes – “There is no evidence that he had.” (Berton 2001, 336)

F/ February 1948 – King in his diary – “never been able to understand why the people of the Defence Department were so anxious to send the men they did in such a hurry except to make a name for themselves and the dept.” (Berton 2001, 337)

G/ Grant Dexter (journalist writing in a letter to John Dexter during the hearings hosted by Chief Justice Lyman Duff) – “On the one occasion when we had to organize an expeditionary force – Hong Kong – the General Staff, the Quartermaster and the Adjutant General made a mess of it....The only word for them is incompetent!” (Berton 2001, 338)

H/ Private in Winnipeg Grenadiers – “The whole thing was disorganized confusion. Nobody was prepared for it. There was no communication. We didn’t have transportation. You carried everything on your back.” (Berton 2001, 341)

Timeline

1. January, 1941 - British Prime Minister Winston Churchill on the issue of sending reinforcements to Hong Kong. “This is all wrong. If Japan goes to war there is not the slightest chance of holding Hong Kong or relieving it. It is most unwise to increase the loss we shall suffer there. Instead of increasing the garrison, it

ought to be reduced to a symbolic scale.... I wish we had fewer troops there....”

2. July, 1941 – Major-General A.E. Grassett, having retired as commander-in-chief of the Hong Kong garrison, informally tells his old friend, Harry Crerar, then Canadian CGS, (Chief of the General Staff) that an additional regiment or two provided the Hong Kong garrison would enable them to hold the colony for an extended period of time against virtually any Japanese force.

3. July, 1941 - Grassett travels to England and convinces the War Office (in particular, Air Chief Marshall Sir Robert Brook-Popham) and Churchill that there is little danger of a Japanese attack, and, in the unlikely event of an attack, an increased show of force might scare the Japanese off.

4. Prime Minister Churchill reverses his earlier position and naively accepts the altered attitude.

5. September 4, 1941 – At a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff, Major-General Grassett argues in favour of two additional battalions for the Hong Kong garrison and for the first time in writing suggests that Canada would be willing to supply them.

6. September 19, 1941 – Britain formally requests that Canada send “one or two” battalions to Hong Kong to support the four British battalions garrisoned there. This is the basis for the Canadian decision.

7. Major-General H.D.G. “Harry” Crerar (Chief of the General Staff and Canada’s chief military advisor and senior army officer) notes that Canada “should definitely take this on.”

8. October 2, 1941 – Canada agrees to send two battalions.

9. Canadian authorities, believing that the battalions would be engaged in nothing more strenuous than garrison duty, decide not to expend two trained battalions destined for the European theatre. Rather, they choose two battalions just back from similar duties in Newfoundland and Jamaica. The geographical and ethnic balance – the Royal Rifles from French Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers from the West – appear highly convenient.

10. Because of the international situation, Canadian officials believe it is necessary to organize the force as quickly and as secretly as possible.



11. Canadian HQ labels the two battalions as “in need of refresher training or insufficiently trained and not recommended for operations.” (Berton 2001, 337)

12. In “an atmosphere of incredible confusion” the army hastily organizes a force of 1,975 infantry soldiers. (Berton 2001, 337)

13. October 16, 1941 - The situation in the Far East changes for the worse. The Japanese government is replaced by the war party under the leadership of the highly aggressive Hideki Tojo. The U.S. put its Pacific forces on immediate alert. Canada does nothing.

14. October 24, 1941 – Two cables from the Canadian office in London indicate growing concern about events in the Pacific. One advises an armed cruiser escort for the *Awatea* “in view of the altered circumstances.”

15. October 27, 1941 – The contingent sets sail. It is discovered that fifty-one soldiers who should have been on board have deserted, and that there are twenty-three soldiers on board that should not have been. They have been added as reinforcements, even though another battalion has rejected them as medically unfit.

16. The *Awatea* is not large enough to carry the entire contingent. One hundred and fifty men have to be

crammed aboard the *Awatea*’s escort, the CNR’s merchant cruiser, *Prince William*.

17. Neither vessel can carry the expedition’s transport – 212 vehicles. Only 20 “priority vehicles” are shipped cross-country from Montreal to Vancouver in the hopes that they can be crammed aboard the *Awatea*. The order for the rest of the vehicles is simply cancelled.

18. October 28, 1941 -The twenty “priority vehicles” arrive in Vancouver the day after the expedition has departed.

19. October 28, 1941 – Mackenzie King, speaking in Ottawa, says that “any day we may see the Pacific Ocean as well as the Atlantic the scene of conflict.” But, as Berton notes, “nothing was done.” (Berton 2001, 339)

20. November 4, 1941 - Eventually all the support equipment is loaded onto an American freighter that sails for Hong Kong. However, it never arrives, having been diverted to the Philippines after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

21. December 15, 1941 – Defence Minister J. L. Ralston becomes aware of the equipment fiasco for the first time.

22. The two battalions are told of their final destination only after they leave Hawaii.



Hong Kong on Nov. 16, 1941: Canadian soldiers marching to their barracks at Sham Shui Po, after debarking from the H.M.C.S. *Prince Robert* (Public Archives C-49744)



23. November 16, 1941 – The *Awatea* docks at Hong Kong.

24. December 8, 1941 (December 7 in North America) – The Japanese attack.

25. December 13, 1941 – The Japanese take the Kowloon peninsula, and make their first demands for surrender.

26. December 17, 1941 – British and Canadian troops refuse further Japanese demands for surrender.

27. December 18, 1941 – Japanese troops, numbering 7,500 men, attempt a landing on Hong Kong island in pitch-black conditions.

28. December 19, 1941 – The Japanese capture Canadian Brigadier J.K. Lawson's headquarters at Wong Nei Chong Gap, a critical location in the heart of the island.

29. December 25, 1941 – The official surrender of the colony takes place at 3 p.m. on Christmas Day.

30. December 25, 1941– At St. Stephen's College, being used as a hospital, there is a terrible massacre as seventy wounded allied troops are bayoneted in their beds and the nurses are repeatedly raped, often to death.

31. Because of the public and political pressure – the latter largely from George Drew of the Ontario

Conservative Party – King calls a commission of investigation headed by Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Lyman Duff.

32. March 2, 1942 – The Commission meets for the first time. Hearings last twenty-two days and are "a clear whitewash." (Berton 2001, 347)

33. July 11, 1942 – George Drew writes Mackenzie King a thirty-two-page letter outlining where the Commissioner's findings did not match the evidence. Drew also writes in *The Globe* – "Actual facts brought out in the evidence were so blood-curdling that the public have a right to know what did take place..." and "evidence of inexcusable blundering, confusions and incompetence had been hidden from the public." (Berton 2001, 348)

34. January, 1948 – Major General C. M. Maltby's official report, written in 1946 to the British War Office and finally released, raises more public and political protests. Maltby, who was in command in Hong Kong in 1941, says that because of their lack of training, the Canadian troops should never have been sent to Hong Kong when it was obvious that war was about to break out.

35. In 1948 – King tables Hong Kong information and evidence in Parliament. However, he does not table either the incriminating Drew letter or the two cables of October 24, 1941 from London. Further, he does not indicate that the Maltby report had been watered down for political reasons.



LESSON SIX

THE COMING OF WORLD WAR II

SUMMARY / OVERVIEW

The actual battle for Hong Kong was many things - short, intense, disorganized, and tragic. For a number of reasons, the 1,975 Canadian troops were thrown into an impossible situation. Virtually every aspect of military planning and strategy worked against them. They were badly out-numbered, ill-equipped, and poorly trained. If that was not bad enough, their leaders were motivated by racist assumptions about the inferiority of the enemy being faced. And finally, against this backdrop, the Canadian troops were ordered to hold an indefensible position. The result was as tragic as it was inevitable – complete defeat.

British intelligence estimated the Japanese strength at about five thousand troops with little artillery support. In reality, the number was ten times that many. In addition, they were battle-hardened troops with considerable fighting experience. And they were fully equipped. Poor planning had resulted in none of the 212 Canadian military vehicles that had been included ever arriving in Hong Kong. The two battalions selected, the Royal Rifles and the Winnipeg Grenadiers, had been on garrison duty, in Newfoundland and Jamaica, respectively. They had absolutely no combat training or experience, and, in fact, had been labelled “unfit for combat” by the high command. The Canadian authorities, deciding that time was of the essence, hastily assembled these troops with very minimal experience. Many had less than five weeks training and several could not even fire a gun. The Allied leadership operated under racist notions about the fighting ability of the Japanese. They believed them to be inferior fighters, unable to see at night, and afraid of the water. As events would sadly prove, nothing could have been further from the truth. The Japanese troops fought with a



savage fury and a fearless dedication. Once the Allied position on the peninsula around Kowloon fell in a matter of days, the garrison was forced to try to hold the island of Hong Kong. That would prove to be an impossible task.

Everybody makes mistakes, including governments. However, the consequences when governments make them, particularly in wartime, are far more serious. In this lesson, students will understand and appreciate the results of the Canadian decision to send troops to Hong Kong. Such decisions made in boardrooms by the high command play out with devastating human consequences on the hard ground of reality. Pierre Berton, writing in a recently published book, *Marching as to War*, called the entire enterprise "a travesty...[and] a blatantly foolish enterprise." Carl Vincent echoes his sentiments. "There was no reason why Canadian troops should have been despatched to the doomed outpost of Hong Kong – but through a combination of British cynicism and Canadian thoughtlessness, they were sent anyway." The greater tragedy may well be if succeeding generations fail to know and applaud the courage of those Canadian troops sent into an impossible situation.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

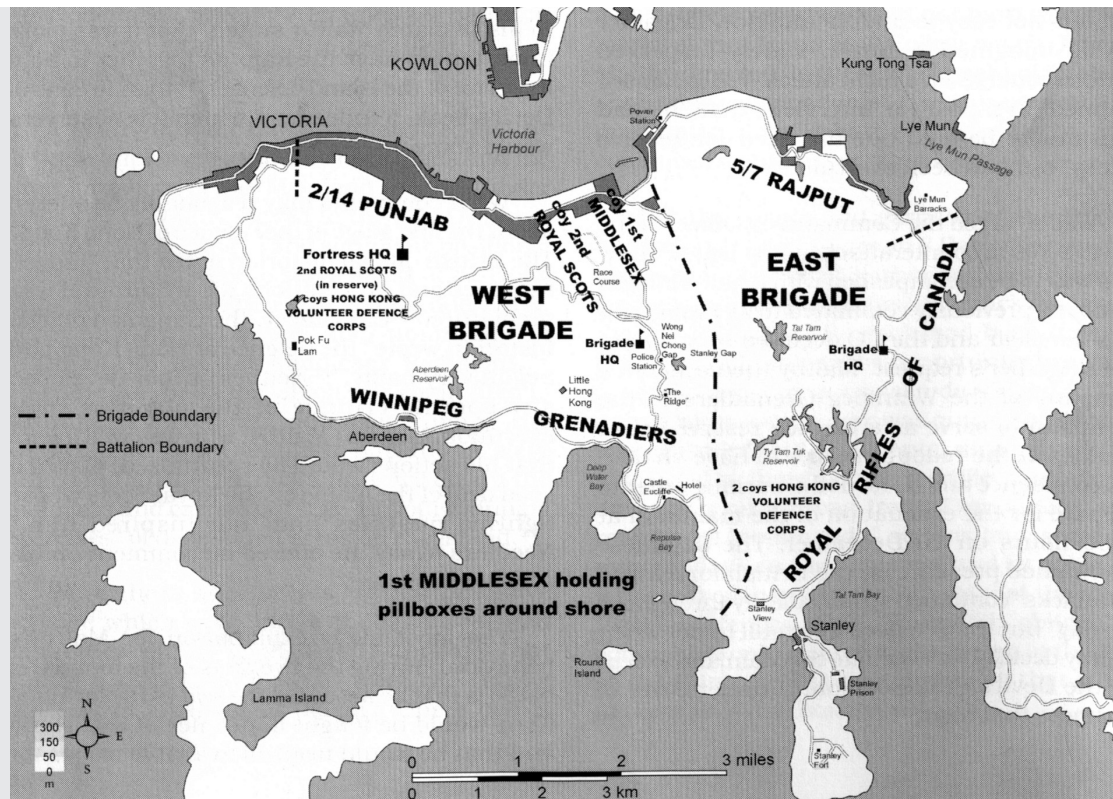
- to increase students' knowledge of the actual battle of Hong Kong
- to have students appreciate how distant decisions play out in reality
- to have students improve their media literacy skills
- to have students understand the human side of war
- to have students improve their map analysis skills
- to increase students' sense of empathy

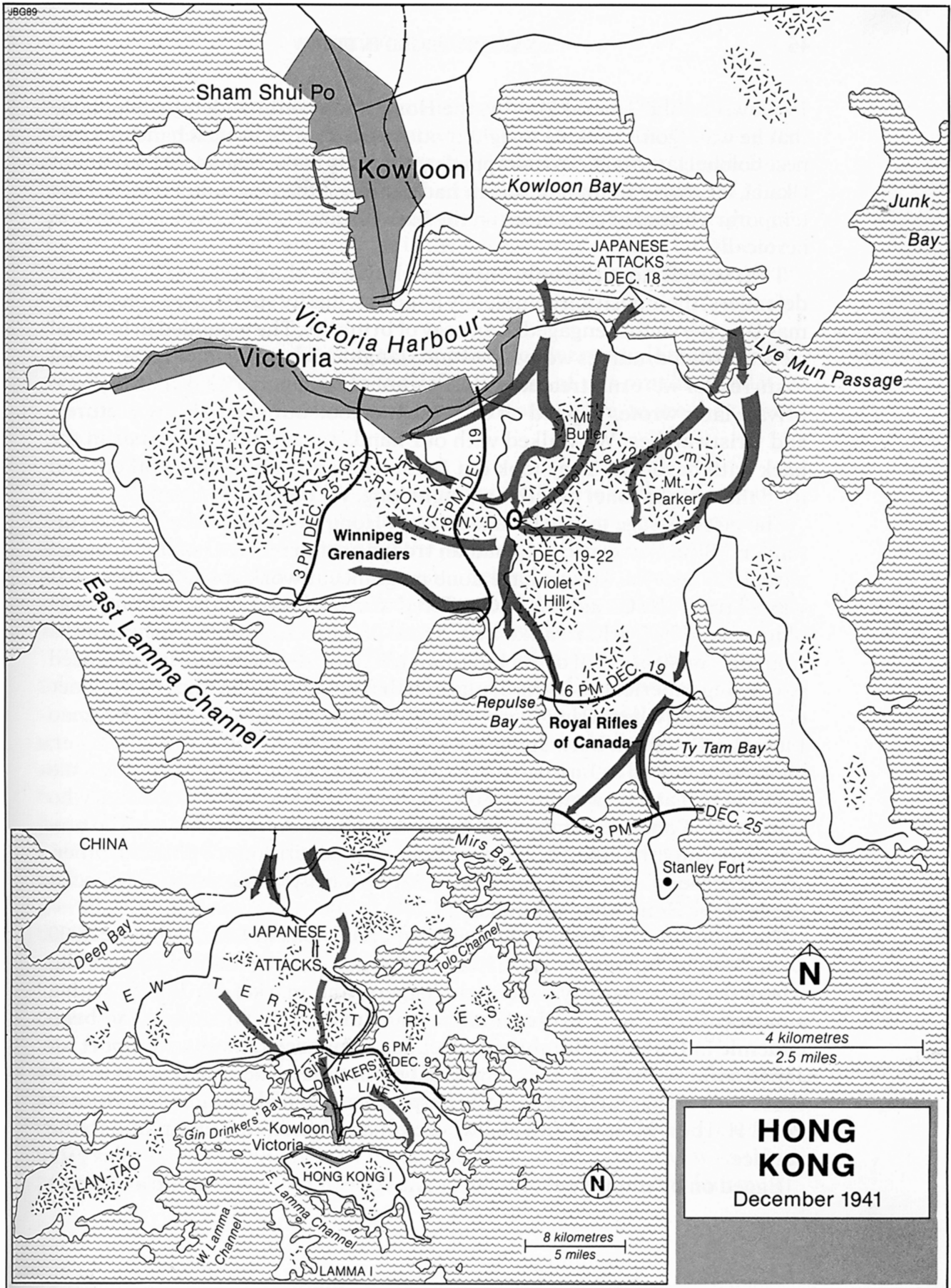
TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

1. Show a twelve to fifteen-minute clip from the McKennas' "A Savage Christmas" that depicts the start of the actual fighting.
2. The first time the video clip is shown, put the VCR on mute and have students take notes solely based on what they see.
3. Rewind the tape and show the exact same clip, this time with audio. Have students add to their notes.
4. At this point, have students analyze both the quantity and quality of information obtained. Which way is

Terry Copp map of TROOP POSITIONS: Canadian Military History, Vol. 10, No. 4 – page 12

Opposite page: Overview Map of the Hong Kong area from page 45, *A Nation Forged in Fire*, Granatstein







better? Why? Can you suggest other reasons why you obtain more – and better – information on the second viewing? What do you think would have happened if the process had been altered so that the first viewing had both video and audio and the second time just video (or just audio)?

5. Map analysis. Begin with an overview map. (Page 12 of Terry Copp's article, "The Defence of Hong Kong, December 1941" contains a map titled "Hong Kong: Troop Positions.") In groups of three or four, have students devise an Allied military strategy (i.e., How and where and how many troops are going to be deployed? What considerations would have to be taken into account [land elevation, Japanese position, location of water, defensible sites, weather, equipment...etc.]?).

6. Then provide students with a second, more detailed map that depicts the actual fighting (the Granatstein/Morton map from page 45 of the text entitled *A Nation Forged In Fire*). Individually, the students are to write daily intelligence briefings (maximum three lines each) from December 19, 1941 to December 25, 1941.

7. Have students put themselves in one of the following positions:

- a. It is war's end and you are returning to Canada. You are writing a letter to the family of a comrade who died in the defence of Hong Kong.
- b. Imagine that it is more than sixty years later and you have returned to the battlefields of Hong Kong. You are writing a letter of your impressions and feelings to your grandchildren.

THOUGHT, DISCUSSION, RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. The Battle of Hong Kong has been compared to a much better-known Canadian military disaster – Dieppe. Is that a fair comparison? What are the similarities? What are the differences? Why is Dieppe, generally speaking, much better known than Hong Kong?

2. What, in your mind, was the single greatest disadvantage faced by Canadian troops at the outset of the Battle of Hong Kong? Explain.

3. Research the role played by John Osborn.

4. Was the defeat of the Allied soldiers inevitable? Why, or why not?

5. Should the allied troops have been allowed to surrender earlier?

6. How might the Canadian troops have held Kowloon? Was it possible? Explain.

7. Could the Japanese have been prevented from crossing Lye Mun Passage? Explain.

8. What was the significance of Wong Nei Chong Gap?

9. Do you think the outcome would have been different had the troops been properly equipped? What if well-trained combat troops had been sent?

10. Research what contemporary Canadian newspapers wrote at the time. What position did they take? Can you suggest reasons for that position?

11. Imagine you are the military officer in charge of writing the wording for the telegram that is sent to families of soldiers killed in action in Hong Kong. How would you word that telegram?

12. Imagine that you are a Canadian soldier trying to hold Wong Nei Chong Gap, but you realize that it is a hopeless struggle. You have two options. Either you will be killed or you will be taken prisoner. You have ten minutes before one of those two eventualities takes place. Write a letter home explaining your predicament and your feelings.

13. Songwriters such as Mike Ford and John Spearn are becoming well known in Canada for taking events from Canada's past and telling a story in song. Write a song about Canadian soldiers in Hong Kong.

14. Create a collage of Hong Kong visuals, obtained either from texts or from the Internet.

15. You have been appointed chief Canadian military investigator. Your task is to write a one-page executive summary report of the Battle of Hong Kong.



LESSON SEVEN

SURVIVING THE PRISONER-OF-WAR CAMPS

SUMMARY / OVERVIEW

The great Russian novelist, Leo Tolstoy, once sagely noted that the best way to judge the degree of civilization of any society was to visit its prisons. For the 1,685 Canadian survivors of the Battle of Hong Kong, this telling indictment speaks not only of the barbarity of the camps but also of the prisoners' incredible will to survive. Imprisoned by their Japanese captors in prisoner-of-war camps at North Point on Hong Kong Island and at Sham Shui Po on Mainland China, the Canadians were forced to endure conditions that could rightly be described as horrific and horrendous. Exhausted from battle, many wounded, they were hoping for the best. What they faced was unknown, but the Geneva Conventions that set out humane rules for the treatment of prisoners gave them some cause for hope. Three and a half years of brutal captivity proved just how illusory those hopes were, and the accuracy of Tolstoy's reflection.

The Japanese violated the Geneva Conventions with impunity. They set their captors to work – in mines, on the docks, and constructing an airport – all in direct violation of the rules regarding the treatment of prisoners of war. Nevertheless, having to work for the Empire of the Rising Sun may well have been the most minor of the Japanese infractions. Not only did the Japanese work their prisoners cruelly, the conditions in which they were kept were inhumane. Food rations were meagre – often only a small bowl of rice. The huts in which they had to live were rat infested, dark, with no heat. The prisoners were forced to sleep on wooden planks or a cement floor. Given their already weakened conditions, the hard work, and the lack of adequate medical care, diseases were rampant through the camps. Dysentery, thyroid problems, diphtheria, wet beri beri, and dry beri beri (hot feet) infected all but a small handful. Drugs



that might have alleviated some of the suffering and saved lives were stolen by camp commanders and sold on the black market. Some prisoners were tortured and others executed.

The camps were, in short, a living hell. The casualty rate was high. While 290 soldiers had died in battle or had been executed by the Japanese, almost the same number died in the POW camps. In total, 554 soldiers of the 1,975 soldiers who originally sailed to Hong Kong were buried or cremated in the Far East. The soldiers who had fought bravely and survived the fighting, in some ways came to envy their fallen comrades. They had come through the battle, but now they faced another challenge in this "hell on earth," although a very different one. For example, those who were fortunate enough to survive typically lost almost half of their body weight.

This lesson seeks to have students understand and empathize with what these men endured. It is a testament to the indomitable human will to survive. We do them a great disservice if we fail either to remember or to commemorate their struggle.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- to have students understand what the conditions in the Japanese POW camps were like
- to have students examine the ethical and legal sides of the issue of the Japanese POW camps
- to have students improve their research skills
- to have students empathize with those who were in the POW camps
- to have students improve their organizational skills
- to have students write persuasive letters and/or papers
- to have students improve their media literacy skills

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

1. For homework, have students conduct an Internet search for "the Geneva Conventions." They should locate what the conventions stipulate about the treatment of prisoners of war. This information should be noted in their books.
2. Students should be taken into the library for a research period. Their specific task is to list the exact

conditions experienced by the prisoners of war in the Japanese camps. Two of the best sources are Dave McIntosh's *Hell on Earth: Aging Faster, Dying Sooner, Canadian Prisoners of the Japanese During World War II* and Charles G. Roland's *Long Night's Journey Into Day: Prisoners of War in Hong Kong and Japan, 1941-1945*. Students could search these and other pertinent sources, as well as more general references.

3. If sources are difficult to obtain, the teacher might read or photocopy an excerpt from either the McIntosh or the Roland book.
4. As students note the conditions in the POW camps, they should devise their own classification and organization structure. (Medical, nutritional, punishment, work, legal, illegal, etc., are some of the possibilities.)
5. Return to the classroom and show a brief video clip, either from "A Savage Christmas" or "Slaves of the Rising Sun."
6. As students view the video, they should add to their list of camp conditions. As well, they should begin to analyze why the conditions were as dreadful as they were.
7. The class should then be divided into thirds. One third will act as prosecutors; one third will act as defense attorneys; one third will play the role of judges. They will legally argue the following indictment: that members of the Japanese Empire did knowingly and wilfully violate the terms and conditions of the Geneva Conventions as they pertain to the treatment of prisoners of war and should therefore be found guilty of crimes against humanity.
8. Conduct the legal trial in groups of three. Both sides should have time to prepare their legal brief. At the conclusion of their presentations, the judge should have an opportunity to write his/her verdict.
9. As a possible research extension activity, students could do one of the following:
 - a. Write an updated version of the Geneva Conventions (related to the treatment of POWs.)
 - b. Write a letter to the current Japanese government expressing concern over what transpired in the WW II camps and demanding redress.
 - c. Write a letter to the present Canadian government expressing support for the Canadian POWs.
 - d. Write a letter to Kofi Annan at the United Nations expressing concern over what transpired in the



MEDICAL HISTORY SHEET

CORRIGAN L.B. Lieut.

The Winnipeg Grenadiers Born: Nov. 11, 1911

Weight: 1941: 195 lbs. Oct. 1943: 140 lbs. July 1945: 160 lbs.

General remarks on 22.5.45:

From	To	Disease	Remarks and Result	Treatment	Med. Off.
24.12.41		Sword wound Right hand	-	NIL	-
8/42		Fever	-	Aspirin	Capt. Reid R.C.A.M.C.
12/42		Beri beri	Oedema feet & ankles disturbed sensation	B1 Injts.	-do-
9.2.43	6.3.43	Malaria B.T.	-	Quinine Course	Major Crawford R.C.A.M.C.
8.7.43		B avitaminosis	Numbness both feet & legs halfway to knee	B1 Injts.	-do-
31.8.43		I.A.T.L. fot.	-	Heat	-do-
18.9.43	29.1.44	Dysentary amoebic	-	Emetine. E.B.I. Enterovioform Yatrin.	Capt. Gray R.C.A.M.C. Major Swyer Major Anderson
14.2.44		B avitaminosis. Sore tongue.	Tharyngitis:	Local.	Maj. Crawford
9.3.44	24.3.44	Peptic ulcer.	Complicated by diarrhoea, Scabies:	Diet. Alkalis. Scrubs.	-do-
6.9.44		B avitaminosis	No complaints Wt. 168 Vision R.20/20 L 20/20	Vit. Capsules	-do-
21.9.44	29.9.44	Sprain L. intercostal muscle.		Chest binder	-do-
15.1.45	18.1.45	Injury	Cut L eyebrow	1 stitch	-do-
10.6.45	26.6.45	Malaria B.T.	-	Quinine gr. 30d. 8d.	Capt. Strahan
3.7.45		Peptic Ulcer	Epigastric pain	gr. Rice diet & eggs	



WWII camps and demanding redress.

- e. Write a letter to the International Court of Justice at The Hague expressing support for the Canadian POWs.
- f. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper expressing support for the Canadian POWs.

THOUGHT, DISCUSSION, AND RESEARCH

1. Students should be required to write one of the research extension activities listed in Task 9 of the Strategies section.
2. Could the conditions in the Japanese camps be considered analogous to those of the camps of the Nazi Third Reich? Why, or why not?
3. Write out a list of minimal conditions that all prisoners of war should be accorded.
4. Causal analysis – Why do you think that the conditions in the Japanese POW camps were so brutal?
5. Write a letter or a series of diary entries imagining yourself as a Canadian POW in the Japanese camps.
6. People sometimes speak of “the indomitable human will to survive.” What is it? Why do some people possess it? Under what conditions and circumstances does it appear?
7. Imagine that it is sixty years later and you are meet-

ing one of your former Japanese prison guards. What would your feelings and attitude be? What sort of questions would you ask?

8. Knowing that the chances of a successful escape were perhaps one in a hundred, or worse, would you have tried to escape or would you have tried to endure the brutal camp conditions? Why?

9. Compare and contrast the internment of the Japanese Canadians in Canada with the treatment accorded the Canadian POWs in the Japanese camps. Is it a fair comparison? Why, or why not?

10. Write a poem or song in praise of the spirit of the Canadian POWs who survived the camps.

11. Research other POW camps, both historical and contemporary. How do they compare with the Japanese camps of World War II?

12. Is there someone to blame for what transpired in the Japanese POW camps? If not, why not? If there is, who is it and what should their punishment be?

13. If evidence is uncovered that a country violated the regulations regarding prisoners of war, what should the punishment be? Explain. Who should enforce it? How?

14. What is the major “lesson of history” that we should derive from the experience of the Japanese prisoner-of-war camps?



Kobe, Japan in August of 1943: Canadian and other Allied POWs enroute to various slave labour camps in Japan



LESSON EIGHT

COMING HOME AND THE ISSUE OF COMPENSATION

INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

The great American writer, Thomas Wolfe, entitled one of his novels *You Can't Go Home Again*. He intended it in another sense but it is no less appropriate for soldiers returning home from war. "Coming home" from any war is a difficult and often traumatic experience. For Canadian soldiers, returning from Hong Kong was traumatic, and more so. These survivors most certainly felt a myriad of emotions – relief, guilt, confusion, euphoria, frustration, and bitterness. And they were the lucky ones. Close to six hundred soldiers of the original contingent, almost one-third, never returned.

Those Canadian soldiers who did come home were scarred, in many cases permanently. There were the evident physical wounds with which they returned. Many were emaciated, having lost close to half of their normal body weight. That was not altogether surprising, given the fact that they were conscripted labour in the POW camps and fed meagre rations. Most returned with a number of different ailments and diseases. Decades of medical treatment in Canada would alleviate some, though scarcely all of them. The overwhelming majority of returning Hong Kong veterans would endure a lifelong variety of medical problems, from hearing and sight loss to intestinal and digestive difficulties.

As serious as their physical challenges were, they paled in comparison to their emotional and psychological difficulties. They had to be demobilized and re-integrated as civilians. They had to struggle to get their lives back in order. They had to return to school, get a job, and make a living. They had to relate to family and friends after having been profoundly changed by their Hong Kong experience. They had to cope with the



sense of guilt that they had survived and friends had not. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) did not exist as a term back then. But it certainly did exist as a devastating reality and condition.

And finally, they had to deal with the issue of compensation. Certainly there was the financial aspect to it, that they should be compensated for what they had endured, and for what they had suffered, as well as for the violation of their rights. But that was merely the tip of the iceberg. They wanted to be recognized, to be acknowledged, and not be forgotten. Compensation was a verification of all those things. In addition, it would be evidence that their own government recognized their suffering, as well as proof that the Japanese government was admitting a wrong and attempting to redress it. Unfortunately, neither government has acted with much dispatch or integrity. It was only in December, 1998, after considerable pressure and lobbying, that the Canadian government granted compensation of \$24,000 to each surviving Hong Kong POW, or POW's widow, after the Japanese refusal to do so.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- to increase students' awareness and understanding of the situation of returning Hong Kong veterans
- to have students attempt to empathize with returning Hong Kong veterans
- to increase students' media literacy skills
- to have students detect and analyze bias
- to have students sensitively judge issues of guilt, responsibility, and compensation
- to have students adopt an ethical position, and articulate and develop it in a written fashion

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

1. Begin by showing the video "Canada's Hong Kong Veterans: The Compensation Story", which is part of the War Amps series *Never Again!*
2. Prior to viewing, divide the class in half. Each side should take notes on the video. One half should record evidence that supports the claim for compensation while the other half should note proof for the anti-compensation side.

3. The entire video is almost an hour in length, so either plan to complete this lesson over two days, or show only short clips of the video.

4. Reassemble the class and record on the blackboard arguments for and against compensation. As you do so, have students evaluate the strength and legitimacy of each point made.

5. Have students identify the bias of the video. What is it? Why might the producers have that particular bias? Is it possible to present a truly unbiased account of this issue? Why, or why not? So what does that tell you about people claiming that they have "no bias" or that "the facts speak for themselves"?

6. Reverse roles within the class. Those who have been recording arguments in favour of compensation must now become opposed to compensation. Those who had been recording arguments against compensation must now become supportive of compensation.

7. Students are to present a legal brief, representing their newly adopted position, that they might have delivered to either the Canadian Parliament or the Japanese Diet (the Japanese legislative assembly). It should be succinct and concise, no more than one page in length.

8. For homework (or if any time remains in class) have students read the articles contained in the Resources section. Their assignment is to identify the main idea (thesis) of each passage, and then to write a reasoned personal response that they might actually mail to the respective body to which they are responding.

RESOURCES

From Human Rights in the Asia Pacific 1931-1945, BC Resource Guide for Teachers

From the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951 (Article 14 [a])

It is recognized that Japan should pay reparations to the Allied Powers for the damage and suffering caused by it during the war. Nevertheless, it is also recognized that the resources of Japan are not presently sufficient if it is to maintain a viable economy to make complete reparation for such damage and suffering and at the



same time meet its other obligations.

From the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951 (Article 14 [b])

Except as otherwise provided in the present treaty, the Allied Powers waive all reparation claims of the Allied Powers, other claims of the of the Allied Powers and their nationals arising out of any actions taken by Japan and its nationals in the course of the prosecution of the war, and claims of the Allied Powers for direct military costs of the occupation.

From the General Assembly of the United Nations (Resolution 2391 [XXIII] of November 26, 1968) – Preamble

Noting that the application to war crimes and crimes against humanity of the rules of municipal law relating to the period of limitation for ordinary crime is a matter of serious concern to world public opinion, since it prevents the prosecution and punishment of persons responsible for those crimes.

Recognizing that it is necessary and timely to affirm in international law through this convention the principle that there is no period of limitation for war crimes and crimes against humanity and to secure its international application.

From Article 1 of the Convention

No statutory limitation shall apply to the following crimes, irrespective of the date of their commission:

- a. War crimes as they are defined in the Charter of the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, of 8 August 1945... for the protection of war victims.
- b. Crimes against humanity whether committed in time of war or in time of peace as they are defined in the Charter of the Inter-National Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, of 8 August 1945... even if such acts do not constitute a violation of the domestic law of the country in which they were committed.

Japan's Responses to the Issue of Compensation

1. Japan paid compensation to the military and civilian prisoners of war of the Allied Powers in accordance with treaties between countries. Examples of compensation paid out include:

- One dollar, fifty cents for each imprisoned day paid to the former imprisoned Canadian Hong Kong veterans
- Seventy-six pounds to each British military prisoner of war and about forty-eight and one-half pounds to each adult civilian internee
- One dollar (US) for each day of internment for the



Group of Canadian and British prisoners: Awaiting liberation by landing party from H.M.C.S. Prince Robert (Public Archives Canada PA – 114811)



United States military and civilian prisoners of war and fifty cents (US) for child internees

2. According to Japan's domestic laws, the legal expiry date (statutory limitation) is fifteen years for legal responsibility of the most serious crimes. More than fifty years has passed since the end of the Asia-Pacific War, so Japan has no legal obligation to the victims of atrocities that were committed so long ago.

3. The governments, including Canada, who signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty had agreed to waive their own citizens' right to make claims (Article 14 [b] of the Peace Treaty). Since treaties govern relations between states, individual prisoners of war have no legal right to claim further compensation directly from the Japanese government.

Japan's Position of Apology

A No War Resolution that expressed Japan's apology was adopted by the Lower House of the Diet (Japanese Parliament) in 1995. This was to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Asia-Pacific War.

The House of Representatives resolves as follows:

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, this House offers its sincere condolences to those who fell in action of wars and similar action all over the world.

Solemnly reflecting on many instances of colonial rule and acts of aggression in the modern history of the world, and recognizing that Japan carried out those acts in the past, inflicting pain and suffering upon the peoples of other countries, especially in Asia, the Members of this House express a sense of deep remorse.

We must transcend differences over historical views of the past and learn humbly the lessons of history so as to build a peaceful international society.

This House expresses its resolve, under the banner of eternal peace enshrined in the Constitution of Japan, to join hands with other nations of the world and to pave the way to a future that allows all human beings to live together.

Individual Apologies

Japanese dignitaries have offered their own individual apology. Arguably, the best known is that of Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi given on August 15, 1995.

Now that Japan has come to enjoy peace and abundance, we tend to overlook the pricelessness and blessings of peace. Our task is to convey to younger generations the horrors of war, so that we never repeat the errors in our history. I believe that, as we join hands, especially with the peoples of neighbouring countries, to ensure true peace in the Asia-Pacific region – indeed in the entire world – it is necessary, more than anything else, that we foster relations with all countries based on deep understanding and trust. Guided by this conviction, the Government has launched the Peace, Friendship and Exchange Initiative, which consists of two parts: support for historical research into the relations in the modern era between Japan and the neighbouring countries of Asia and elsewhere; and rapid expansion of exchanges with those countries....

...During a certain period in the not too distant past, Japan, following a mistaken national policy, advanced along the road to war, only to ensnare the Japanese people in a fateful crisis, and, through its colonial rule and aggression, the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations. In the hope that no such mistake be made in the future, I regard, in a spirit of humility, these irrefutable facts of history, and express here once again my feelings of deep remorse and state my heartfelt apology. Allow me to express my feelings of profound mourning for all victims, both at home and abroad, of that history.

DISCUSSION/HOMEWORK/RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Compile a list of problems, difficulties, and challenges faced by returning Canadian Hong Kong veterans. If that returning veteran had been you, put them in rank order beginning with the most difficult problem.
2. Do you think that returning Hong Kong veterans had it any more difficult than returning veterans from other theatres of conflict during World War II? Why, or why not?
3. If those same veterans were to return to Canada today, do you think they would have an easier or more difficult experience? Justify your answer.



4. How would you assess and describe the Canadian government and people's reaction and response to the returning Hong Kong veterans? Can you suggest reasons for it?
5. What exactly is compensation? How is related to but different from an apology?
6. Should a later government apologize and offer compensation on behalf of the actions of an earlier government? Why, or why not? Are there dangers in doing so? Are there dangers in not doing so?
7. If the compensation is to be financial, how does (or should) a government go about computing it? What factors should be involved?
8. In 1988, the Canadian government paid surviving Japanese Canadians who had been interned in camps in Canada \$20,000. Do you think that was justified? Based upon that decision, what do you think of the government's decision to offer \$24,000 to Hong Kong POWs or their widows? Can you equate suffering?
9. Victims of wrongful legal convictions, for example Donald Marshall, have received compensation packages in excess of \$1 million. Can that be justified? Can the \$24,000 for the Hong Kong veterans be justified?
10. If you had been a Hong Kong veteran, what would you demand? How would you go about trying to get it?
11. Write a response to either the Japanese Diet or Prime Minister Tomiichi.
12. There have been several other claims for compensation, either in war time or peacetime. Research one of them and evaluate the strength of the claim.
13. Do you think that a more generous compensation package, settled sooner, would have brought more of a sense of closure to Hong Kong veterans? Why, or why not? Explain.
14. From the perspective of the issue of compensation for Canadian Hong Kong veterans, do you think that the law is invariably right, fair, and ethical? Why, or why not?



LESSON NINE

ONE SOLDIER'S STORY

SUMMARY / OVERVIEW

This lesson is quite different from the others within this unit of study. It focuses on "one soldier's story" exclusively. The soldier in this case is George MacDonell who provides a gripping and poignant eyewitness account of the men of Canada's "C" Force who fought in Hong Kong. His story is exceptional as well as representative. It is unique because Mr. MacDonell has done the requisite research, invested the time, care, and thought, and has written an accurate and compelling account of the story of Canada in Hong Kong entitled *One Soldier's Story (1939-1945)*. It is a moving testament to both he and his brave comrades who fought and died in the Battle of Hong Kong and to those who suffered the indignities and brutalities of the Japanese prisoner-of-war camps.

One thousand nine hundred seventy-five soldiers journeyed to Hong Kong in the fall of 1941. Nearly one-third of them never returned. Every one of them, those who came home and tried to come to grips with their Hong Kong experience and put their lives, physically and mentally, back together, as well as those who never returned, all had a story to tell. Mr. MacDonell has become their articulate voice. In that way he is fully representative.

This lesson adopts a journalistic approach. In the course of a rambling, yet incisive and revealing interview, Mr. MacDonell offers his insights and perceptions on what happened in Hong Kong, why it happened, and why it remains important. He is the living face and voice of those who are unable to communicate their thoughts and feelings. For a number of reasons, we would be well advised to heed both his words and counsel. By doing so, not only do we acknowledge and



commemorate those courageous Canadians who experienced the tragedy of Hong Kong, but we also ensure that their sacrifice and their lives will not have been in vain. Further, we may well derive lessons that we can successfully apply in our time and thereby heed the words of the American philosopher George Santayana that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- to increase students' knowledge of what transpired in Hong Kong from 1941 to 1945
- to have students understand the nature of asking questions to elicit information
- to have students adopt the role of a journalistic interviewer
- to have students respond, intellectually and emotionally, to information and ideas
- to have students improve their listening skills (The idea here is to possibly offer the interview in the form of an audio cassette.)
- to have students improve their powers to synthesize information

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

1. Have students read carefully a transcript of the interview, recording information that they deem to be important.
2. As a class, ask students which three or four questions (and answers) were the most important and revealing? Why?
3. Select three different questions and create three or four related, follow-up questions that might have been asked of George MacDonell.
4. Put students in the following situation: You have invited George MacDonell to your house for dinner. What three to five additional questions would you want to ask him?
5. Ask students to identify three to five character traits that in their minds best describe the personality of George MacDonell.

6. Students should then write a one-to two-page biographical account of Mr. MacDonell that might appear in their local newspaper.

7. As an enrichment activity, students might be asked to organize a guest appearance in the class by either George MacDonell or another Hong Kong veteran.

8. As a foreword to his book, George MacDonell quotes the inscription on the Great War Memorial Wall of the Soldiers' Tower at the University of Toronto (which was taken from Pericles' funeral oration to the Athenians in 431 B.C.)

Take these men for your example. Like them, remember that Prosperity can only be for the free. That freedom is the sure possession of those alone who have the courage to defend it.

What do you think it means? Why do you think George MacDonell used it to open his personal account of Canada in Hong Kong from 1941 to 1945?

9. Students should write a personal reflective article. Imagine that you are in your late teens or early twenties. An international conflict has escalated into fighting and Canada is committed to one side in the dispute. Your government has put out a call for volunteers. Would you go and fight? Under what conditions would you agree to go? Why would you refuse? Explain your position with a well-reasoned and thoughtfully argued response.

10. Remembrance Day, November 11, is an annual commemoration of soldiers, like those in Hong Kong who sacrificed on our collective behalf. Yet, some have argued that since many of the living symbols of conflicts and wars of the past are no longer with us, it becomes increasingly difficult to organize ceremonies and observations that have relevance for young people. What suggestions could you provide to make the ritual observation of Remembrance Day more meaningful?

GEORGE MACDONELL INTERVIEW

This interview was conducted Friday, November 9, 2002 at the OHASSTA (Ontario History and Social Science Teachers Association) Conference. The responses are greatly abridged. (The interviewer is Nick Brune, the author of the Ten Lessons.)



1. Nick Brune: Your Hong Kong experience happened almost sixty years ago. What sorts of feelings and emotions do you have about it today? Have those feelings and emotions changed with the passage of time?

George MacDonell: It was a terrible military mistake resulting primarily from faulty intelligence and a poor grasp of strategy on cabinet's part. Politicians who had little understanding of the true picture made the military decisions. I personally have absolutely no bitterness, no personal anger or animosity. We're an un-military people; war thrust upon us. So what usually results when you have such a people with poor military intelligence and faulty decisionmaking is Dieppe and Hong Kong. There were terrible blunders by a people unprepared to defend themselves.

I am very sorry about the young men dying, but at the same time I am extremely proud of the way Canadians responded to the challenge. The crucial question is, "Would we surrender in face of an impossible situation or would we do our utmost?" And we chose the harder road, but I believe there were really no other alternatives. Surrender was never an option – until we were ordered to do so. The troops never deserted their positions; they never put their hands in the air. We were ordered to surrender after refusing to disarm. The troops never became a mob; never a rabble. And that is very different from other experiences involving other troops at other times. Within this disaster – we would never surrender; never acknowledge that we were defeated. Every soldier had a personal bullet stitched into his left-hand pocket. The final round was for the soldier himself. But we weren't quitters. We wouldn't take the easy way out. We were ordered to surrender by our officers. And finally the governor of Hong Kong had to put in writing that we had to lay down our arms. For eighteen days we were overwhelmed and overpowered.

Our leaders in the field were good. But that couldn't necessarily be said about the politicians who made the big decisions. What happened in Hong Kong is reminiscent of a comment made by German General Ludendorff, who said of the British army after the disaster at the Battle of Mons: "This is an army of lions led by jackasses." There were a series of incompetent decisions made supported, of necessity, by Canadian troops in the field. We were prepared to die rather than disgrace ourselves.

Our intelligence never said anything good about the Japanese. We were told that they were substandard

and they turned out to be superior soldiers - disciplined, extremely brave, very experienced, and well armed.

Hong Kong was a tragedy then and is a tragedy now. But at the same time it was a tragedy in which remarkable courage was displayed. Hong Kong showed the spirit of the Canadians in the defence of their country.

2. N.B.: Do you think you'll ever forget about Hong Kong? Do you ever dream about it?

G. M.: Dreams of Hong Kong have persisted for sixty years. They have always persisted. They never go away. My most vivid dream is of the POW camps. I see the camp parade square and feel a powerless sense of frustration. In the dream I see the Canadians being told many, many times: "You will never go home; you haven't served your time here. Your country is under Japanese control. You'll be here forever." The dreams have died down a little bit over the last little while but I still have at least one a year. No one ever escapes the emotional trauma of being treated like a slave. No one escapes that total loss of control over your life. You have no control over any aspect of your life – for four years. You never get over it.

3. N.B.: With what feelings did you go to Hong Kong? Do you think that your sentiments were widely shared by your fellow soldiers? Or were they largely unique?

G.M.: Excited, all of us were excited. I didn't know when and where we were going. We were a bunch of farm boys. We had confidence in our government. Our government would never throw us into danger. That is what we believed. We had absolute confidence in ourselves. As well, we had the young person's invincibility. We all felt a great sense of excitement. Remember, we were very young. Seventy percent were twenty-two years of age or younger. There were soldiers as young as seventeen.

4. N.B.: How did your family and friends respond to your travelling to Hong Kong? Describe your departure scene. Did you receive letters from them?

G.M.: I didn't know our destination. Remember, there were one million Allied troops fighting throughout the world, all saving Western civilization. We were just 2,000 of that number. We simply didn't know where we



were going. I remember standing on the dock in Vancouver. It was a beautiful sunny day. The train pulled up by the dock and the troops lined up, and prepared to receive the order to board the ship. I never received any letters. Letters from home took one to two weeks. But virtually no one received any.

5. *N.B.: Exactly when and where did you find out that you were being sent to Hong Kong? What was your reaction? That of your fellow soldiers?*

G.M.: I was from Listowel, Ontario. Like my fellow soldiers, I had been told nothing really. I was given embarkation leave of seven days and told to get ready after that to pull out. After the leave, the only hint was that we were issued tropical uniforms. So the thinking was that we must have been going to the desert. Probably Libya, as there was heavy fighting going on there. We were finally told that Hong Kong was our destination when we were at sea. When we pulled out from Vancouver, only one person knew the destination. That was the CO and of course he'd been told not to divulge it until told to do so. It must have been just before Hawaii; probably three or four days out of Vancouver, may be even less. Knowing where we were actually going didn't make any difference. Again, we were so young, and we were so full of confidence.

6. *N.B.: How much did you know about Hong Kong before you shipped out?*

G.M.: Nothing.

7. *N.B.: What was the trip to Hong Kong like?*

G.M.: It was crowded. The food was monotonous (Australian mutton was the most frequent meal). Of course there was no air conditioning. As a result, most of the men slept on deck under the stars. We trained on deck, worked on our machine guns, that sort of thing. We had recruits who had only really been in the army three weeks. Some of them didn't know how to fire a gun.

8. *N.B.: What were your impressions of Hong Kong when you first arrived?*

G.M.: I was stunned. It was so sophisticated –

the cities of Kowloon and Hong Kong. They were elegant, modern, big cities, with buses, wide teeming population. Our barracks were beautiful – spotless, with beautiful messes. Remember that Hong Kong was called the “Pearl of the Orient” and it rightly deserved the title. And the Canadian dollar went so far – food, services, rickshaw rides, anything. It was all dirt cheap.

9. *N.B.: Describe a typical day in Hong Kong prior to the outbreak of hostilities.*

G.M.: Most of it was taken up with training, preparation, trying to learn our position on the island. That sort of thing. There was absolutely no wasted time. But there was a quick change from our initial feeling of excitement to recognizing that our defence position was a serious problem. We were ordered to stay on the perimeter of the island, close to the water. Our orders told us to be prepared to defend attacks from the sea. But our commander saw that that wasn't going to happen. Somehow we had been told to contradict the most basic military strategy and logic – always get the high ground.

10. *N.B.: Who were your best friends in Hong Kong? What happened to them? Do you keep in touch with those still alive today?*

G.M.: The other sergeants in my company and I were close friends. Almost all of the guys I got to know well were killed in battle or got split up. After the war I would see some of them, in going to meetings and reunions. However, I got so depressed in those kinds of situations that I had to stop going to them altogether. I was being asked to remember, but all I wanted to do was to break away from those memories and forget.

I carried this large, unconscious sense of guilt, which I imagine many returning veterans did as well – this sense that my friends had died and I had not. I never shirked my duty. I was always at the front of troops. But I couldn't cope with being alive and the fact that they were not. I was virtually in tears every Christmas Day – this overwhelming sense that I was alive and they were not. So I went to Sunnybrook Hospital and saw a doctor, and he in turn recommended a psychiatrist. I had three or four sessions with him. The most profound conclusion came around his central question – Is it your fault? My answer was – No. But



then he asked me - Do you believe that? That was exactly what I was having trouble dealing with. I really didn't believe it.

All the good things that were happening in my life after my return from the war turned to ashes. Always, just below the surface, I was asking myself - why do you deserve this? It was a huge self-inflicted burden. And I just couldn't talk to anyone about it. I started mentioning it to a few very close friends and they suggested that I should write it down. My visit to see the Chinese doctor, Dr. Keith Wong, who was very sensitive and who had helped other POWs turned out to be the critical decision. He was an extremely insightful person. He told me to write it all down; to say what had happened. In that way I could leave a record for the children and grandchildren of my comrades. So I began putting it down and I found facing up to it was very helpful. But I didn't want to write a bitter, vengeful account. Rather, I wanted a balanced approach. The story should not just be all the gore, all the racial hatred, because that wouldn't be helpful. I'm eighty years old so I could be a little more balanced and reflective.

11. N.B.: *What were you doing when the first fighting broke out? What was your emotional reaction to the fighting?*

G.M.: I was at Lye Mun. My men and I could hear the battle raging but since we thought the enemy would come from the sea, we stayed in our positions a mile or two away. We listened to the uproar. We weren't engaged until dawn of the next morning. In combat, I was always a leader, so I was worried about whether or not we had enough food, enough ammunition; whether we were in the right positions. The important concerns that vitally affected my platoon totally absorbed me, so I didn't really have any strong personal emotional reaction to the start of the fighting. I do remember being afraid of being wounded, lacerated mostly. However, I was preoccupied with my troops. I can say that I was never frightened.

12. N.B.: *How would you describe the life of a soldier?*

G.M.: In peacetime, I liked it, especially the comradeship. I had it great. I was a seventeen-year-old kid rapidly being promoted and learning something new every day. I enjoyed the activities, the training, just the

whole atmosphere and environment. In combat, I was not terribly afraid. In fact, I reached a high - a kind of super high - an adrenaline pumping kind of rush. It was an indescribable kind of excitement.

13. N.B.: *What did you think of the fighting abilities of the Japanese?*

G.M.: It's important in answering that question to understand the culture. However, at the time, I, like virtually every single Canadian, had no real concept of that culture - let alone a true understanding. The Japanese represented a completely different culture. It wasn't a question that it was a culture that was inferior and not as advanced as our own. It was just a matter that it was very different from where we came from. In terms of military matters, that difference had a great impact. The Japanese believed in either killed or be killed; they had no respect for anyone who surrendered. Added to that, in their military planning, they could not be encumbered by prisoners. At Iwo Jima, 76,000 Japanese soldiers fought to the death. Not a single soldier surrendered. They weren't murderous but they were savage beyond the extreme. What they did to captured civilians and soldiers was beyond belief. It is a known fact, though not widely known, that they engaged in cannibalism as they ate body parts of executed American pilots. However - and it is a very large however - when we look back on what occurred, we must make a distinction between the average Japanese individual and the Japanese soldier. Japanese civilians had none, absolutely none, of that savagery.

As soldiers, the Japanese were excellent. They were superb. They had better weapons; they understood how to fight in mountainous terrain; they had all the necessary equipment. Importantly, they used mules instead of what we used - humans - to carry equipment up the mountains. We were constantly exhausted and constantly consuming water - you had to - doing such heavy physical labour in a very hot climate. So when we were finished the job, we were completely dehydrated. Running out of water was a big problem for a soldier. The Japanese had great light artillery. Perhaps one of the greatest advantages was their excellent camouflage. It was superb. They could be thirty yards away and you couldn't see them. So often that allowed them to slip around behind us. Finally, they were much better trained than we were. They were the 38th Division, which had been fighting in China for two years - and they showed it.



14. *N.B.: What did you think about the Japanese, in general?*

G.M.: As far as the soldiers in the field were concerned, there was no crime they didn't commit. But the people of Japan weren't like that at all. In fact, many of us wouldn't be alive if it wasn't for them. They stole and lied for us. In many ways, they kept us alive. If the general population had mirrored the troops, then none of us would have survived. In general, I have a great respect and liking for the Japanese people. I bear them absolutely no hostility.

15. *N.B.: What were the relations like between Canadian enlisted men and officers in Hong Kong?*

G.M.: They were excellent. We had outstanding senior officers and we had great respect for them. They were all World War I veterans. They were highly respected.

16. *N.B.: Were you ever frightened for your life in Hong Kong?*

G.M.: Absolutely! On Christmas Day, we were ordered to attack Stanley Village. I really thought I was going to die. And I couldn't get over the thought that my Mom would be very unhappy about that. The only thing that saved me from certain death was that their shots simply missed me. It was somehow fitting and symbolic that this final clash took place in a graveyard.

17. *N.B.: Describe how you were taken prisoner.*

G.M.: At 8:30 at night, we were ordered to lay down our arms and stop resisting the Japanese. The Japanese left us alone for two days. That was wonderful and so many of us simply lay down and slept. We were so exhausted and sleep deprived. Sentries slept where they stood. We were all very disoriented.

18. *N.B.: What were conditions in the POW camps like? Which camp were you in?*

G.M.: You have to understand that the Japanese were never prepared to run the camps. They had no experience, leadership, or plan. In fact, in terms of leadership, the camp commanders were misfits. They

were sick quirks who couldn't make it in the army. The combat officers were different. They had respect for other soldiers, especially for the Canadians. The guards were almost all Japanese, though it varied. Some of the Korean guards were terrible, just as bad as the Japanese, if not worse.

19. *N.B.: Describe your typical day. When did you get up? What work did you do? What food were you given? Did you have any "free time"? When did you go to sleep?*

G.M.: It's been estimated that an average man needs 3,500 calories to remain healthy. It's been estimated that as POWs in the Japanese camps we received about 1,000 to 1,200 calories. Most of it consisted of rice, barley, and assorted greens, and eventually we began to starve to death. A deficiency of 2,000 calories per day means simply that the body breaks down – the optic nerve; heart muscle; both break down. They simply can't function as they normally do. The immune system breaks down. So many just died of treatable diseases. For instance, in cold climates such as where we were in Japan, pneumonia killed in a matter of three days. I could never understand the motivation of the Japanese. Never understood it! They never showed any concern. And yet we were working and assisting in their mines and docks, so we were of benefit of them. And yet they never showed any kind of concern. A farmer shows concern for a plough horse when it is in bad health. But never the Japanese. Thirty percent of all Japanese POWs died, and, by comparison, three percent of German POWs died.



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20. *N.B.: Had you ever heard of the Geneva Conventions while you were held prisoner?*

G.M.: Yes, we knew about them. But when we challenged the Japanese that they were not living up to them, they simply replied that they had never signed them in the first place. They concluded by saying, "so just shut up and be thankful that you're alive." They were not a civilized enemy.

21. *N.B.: What happened to your health while in the camp?*

G.M.: I was one of the lucky ones. I survived. But nevertheless I was affected by an assortment of medical problems, and when I was released I weighed less than 148 pounds. I had started the war at 210 pounds. I was a walking skeleton.

22. *N.B.: Did you ever give up hope?*

G.M.: Never! I was determined to live through it no matter what. And that feeling was repeated by my comrades. It was part of our training and psychology. We were the best; we were temporarily in a bad situation. But we'd beat it.

23. *N.B.: How did you hear about the ending of the war? What was your reaction?*

G.M.: By radio. A secret radio that the Japanese never knew we had. It was concealed in a hollow beam. A ship, the American cruiser, "Houston," had sunk and the radio staff went over the side but they managed to save parts of the powerful receiver. It was assembled and it found its way to our camp, which was close to a mine. We listened to AFN (American Forces Network) – a program called "Treasure Island" on a radio station in San Francisco. It broadcast the news twice a day to troops in the Pacific. So we knew about the dropping of the atomic bomb when the camp commander didn't have a clue. By radio, we heard that at noon on August 12 the Japanese emperor was going to speak. But at that point, which was a couple of days before the announced speech, we weren't sure exactly what he would say. He might very well have instructed his people to continue the fight, to fight to the death. But on August 12, we heard the broadcast instructing the Japanese to lay down their arms, that the surrender was official.

24. *N.B.: Do you remember your return to Canada? What was your reception back home like?*

G.M.: Incredible! We landed at Gordon Head Reception Centre in Victoria. We were issued new uniforms. We had complete medical checks. Our new uniforms were fully tailored. After ten days, which let us acclimatize ourselves as well as get part of our health back, we were allowed to go into Victoria. We couldn't buy anything in stores; we couldn't pay for a meal in a restaurant. Everything was given to us. We were treated as conquering heroes. It was embarrassing. We were each given one hundred dollars, which was a lot of money in those days. But we never were able to spend it on anything. Perhaps my happiest moment was when I signed over my sixty-eight men. Now someone else was going to look after them and be responsible for them. In my camp, at the time of release, the Americans told me that I was responsible for seeing that those men got back home safely. When I got the receipt for the safekeeping of those men, my heartbeat went well over one hundred. I had to be hospitalized and sedated. I had promised my men that we'd be home by Christmas. And all sixty-eight of them made it home with a week to spare. We had survived by being strong, mentally and physically. We had survived one day at a time, one foot at a time. We had this powerful will to survive and not to disgrace the uniform.

25. *N.B.: How difficult was it for you to readjust to civilian life? What was the greatest challenge? Why?*

G.M.: It was terrible. It was so different and I felt so guilty. Now nobody's telling you what to do – no one crowding you – poking you with a bayonet. You're totally on your own. But this sense of freedom and independence, after this life of strict regimen and orders, was difficult and threatening. You didn't really know what to do. The next feeling was one of anxiety. Here we were, released, but not knowing what to do. Again there was that sense of anxiety. There was no daily command structure; there were no daily plans and orders. In the Army, everything is planned and regimented down to the smallest detail. Now I was completely on my own, so those feelings of security and order and certainty were all gone.

I spent my first year at the University of Toronto. And, quickly, things started to come together. I did suf-



fer from severe abdominal pains. The doctor said they were simply withdrawal symptoms and told me to relax.

26. N.B.: What did you decide to do for a living? What success did you have in that endeavour? Did you marry? Have children? Grandchildren? Where in Canada did you live?

G.M.: I thought I wanted to be a lawyer, so I went to see Bora Laskin at the law school at the University of Toronto. He gave me some law books, and they bored me to tears. Then I went to see Dean Bissell at the university, and he asked me what I liked to do. I told him that I had loved being an officer, so he helped steer me into the field of industrial relations. I came to love that area just as much.

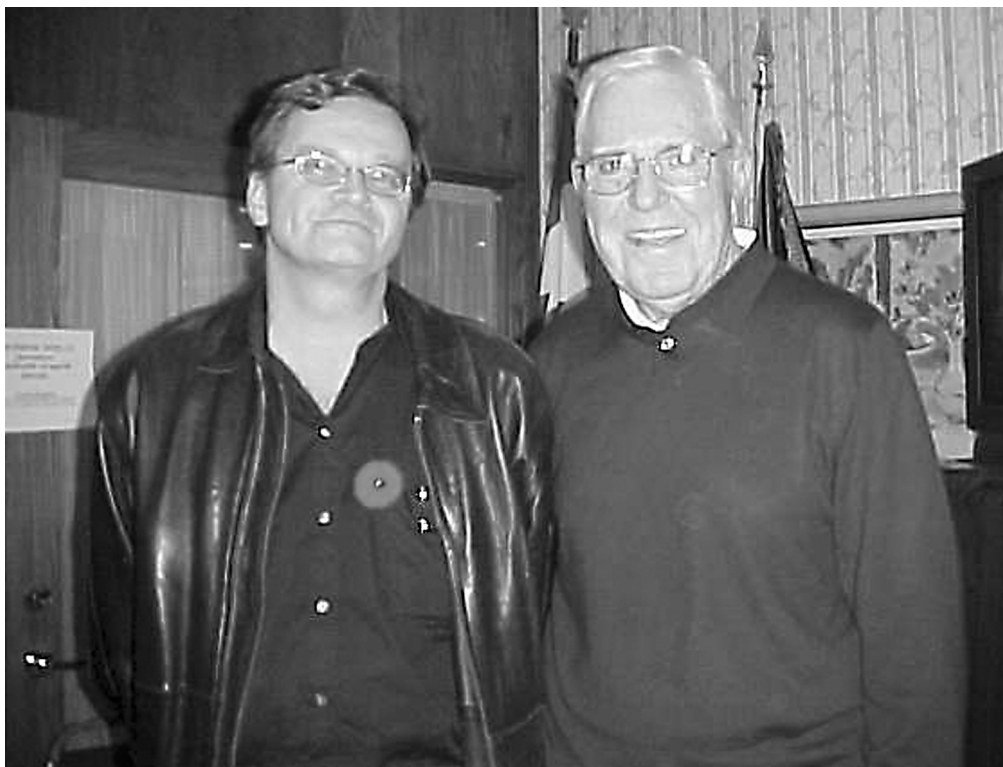
While I was in school, I wrote a paper on General Electric and their industrial relations. And I was extremely critical of GE. Pretty soon after I submitted the paper, which received an A+, the phone rang. It was the secretary of the president of GE. I wondered: How did he get my paper? I later learned that my course instructor and the president were close friends. He asked me if I had written the paper? I said that I had. He asked me if I believed what I had written in it. And again I said yes. So he said that he wanted me to come to work for him the next Monday. I told him that I couldn't do that, that I was still working on my MA. I

wouldn't be through for at least another year and a half. Well, he and his company were big contributors to the U of T – something that I didn't know at the time. So he said that was no problem; that they could easily work something out. And he did. I worked for GE half days and for the other half, I was a student. This was 1948. He offered me forty dollars a week. I thought he was kidding. I couldn't believe that anyone would pay me that much money. So I said, " Oh, right!" He thought I was negotiating and said, "Oh, all right, make it fifty." I was in a complete state of shock. I went home and told my wife, "We're rich." I rose rapidly, step by step, until I became a senior executive, and a member of the Board at General Electric.

We have two children, Paul and Susan, both fifty now. And one grandchild, Tyler, who is eleven.

27. *N.B.: Who do you hold responsible for what happened to you in Hong Kong?*

G.M.: I think it was Prime Minister Mackenzie King - for purely political reasons. He wanted the Opposition off his back – he sent the troops. He was being accused of harbouring his troops, of not wanting to send them into combat. In his defence, he was told Hong Kong was a secure position, that there was no danger. But clearly he was given bad advice. The



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Australians and the troops from India were fighting in the desert. Everybody was helping Britain, but the Canadians troops hadn't been sent to engage the Germans at this point. Mackenzie King wanted to show he was warlike. Remember, this was a man who had come back from Europe extolling the virtues of Hitler.

28. N.B.: *What would, in your view, constitute adequate compensation? To whom should it be given? Who should provide it?*

G.M.: The federal government. They are the ones responsible for war-related injury and anything that prevents a soldier from living and supporting his family.

29. N.B.: *Do you think that this present generation and government can and should be called to account and held responsible for what a previous generation and government did?*

G.M.: The modern government has been exceptionally good. They never lacked sympathy or understanding. It was the Canadian government who compensated Canadian troops for their slave labour in the Japanese POW camps when the Japanese government refused, so I have no criticism of the Canadian government on that score. They just didn't know about tropical diseases or post-traumatic stress disorder. They'd never really experienced anything like that before. They never tried to hide from their responsibility. The major problem now is, of course, that there are so few survivors remaining.

30. N.B.: *How do you think of the Japanese today?*

G.M.: Respectful. I competed with many Japanese business executives while I was at GE. I have absolutely no hatred or animosity towards them. I find them warm and respectful.

31. N.B.: *People frequently speak of "defining moments." Clearly, Hong Kong marked such an event in your own life. How do you think your Hong Kong experience changed your life?*

G.M.: It taught me that I could draw on enormous reserves, that I wouldn't break under pressure, that I was a survivor. It gave me a heavy dose of confidence. It also served to put things in perspective. You

learn what's really important. It helped me to know who I am.

32. N.B.: *If you could have changed any one thing about your Hong Kong experience, what would it be?*

G.M.: I would have insisted that military intelligence be better. If it had been, it might have prevented the whole debacle. We might never have gone to Hong Kong. Remember, Churchill had initially said that no one should be sent there, that it would be a waste of men. That prediction turned out to be true. But our military intelligence messed up. Too few listened to those with professional military training.

33. N.B.: *Are you bitter about what happened to you? Do you think your comrades share your sentiment? Why, or why not?*

G.M.: Not a bit. We were faced with a crisis, and we did it without a blink. The government made a mistake, but they did not deliberately try to kill us. It was just a grave mistake.

34. N.B.: *Did Canada make the right decision in committing troops to Hong Kong?*

G.M.: No! Canada should not have sent troops to Hong Kong because the island could not be successfully defended. Water and food for the civilian population of more than a million people came from the mainland, so a prolonged siege would have meant starvation and disaster for everyone. Our military supply lines were too far away to supply or support our troops in the face of a superior Japanese navy and air force that controlled the approaches to Hong Kong.

35. N.B.: *What legacy, personally and nationally, do you think Hong Kong has had?*

G.M.: Hong Kong has shown us that poor preparation for our defence and faulty intelligence are serious mistakes for a nation wishing to preserve its freedom, and protect itself from aggressors like Hitler. Also, it has shown once again the determination, courage, and self-sacrifice of those young Canadians who, during the national crisis of World War II, stepped forward to defend their country.



36. *N.B.: Why do you think that the Canadian experience in Hong Kong has been largely ignored and forgotten by Canadians?*

G.M.: It was too remote, too overshadowed. It was soon forgotten with the great struggle in Europe. It was swept under the rug. The Canadian government didn't want to publicize it – for obvious reasons. It was the beginning of the end of the British Empire. It was the first card that led to the whole collapse. It was probably just easier to forget the whole thing.

37. *N.B.: Have you travelled to Hong Kong or Japan since the war?*

G.M.: Yes. I have returned to Hong Kong to visit my comrades who lie buried in the Sai Wan Cemetery near Lye Mun. I have tramped on the ground we fought over, and where so many of my company were killed. The terrain was even more difficult and forbidding than I remembered it.

38. *N.B.: If you could write an epitaph for those who died in Hong Kong, how would it read?*

G.M.: It would read: Against overwhelming odds, without thought of surrender, they fought bravely for their cause in the best tradition of the Canadian army. Their conduct both on the battlefield and in Japanese prison camps was characterized by their discipline, their courage, and their loyalty to their country. Theirs is a story of the strength and dignity of the human spirit, and about those who believe in service before self.

39. *N.B.: What is the most important lesson that the current generation should derive from the Hong Kong experience?*

G.M.: There may come another time in the future when young Canadians are faced with a national crisis similar to that of 1939. If that occurs, then all Canadians must be prepared to fight, and sacrifice their lives if necessary, in defence of their country.

40. *N.B.: What led you to write your book? What was your prime purpose? What, in your mind, will mark it as a success?*

G.M.: I wrote *One Soldier's Story* to provide an eyewitness account of what happened in Hong Kong in 1941 for the wives, children, and grandchildren of those who served with me in Hong Kong. I felt that the story, so little known, should be told so that it could become part of our history. The book will be a success if it makes us a little prouder to be Canadians, and if it reminds young people that preserving our Canadian citizenship exacts a price, that of defending our country and its people.

41. *N.B.: What do you think has happened to Canada's military over the last sixty years?*

G.M.: The government of Canada has lost sight of the fact that, although we have no territorial ambitions and are not a military nation, we must have a minimum armed force to ensure our national security.

42. *N.B.: How do you think Canadians generally regard their military today? Is that view a reflection of the government's view?*

G.M.: After the 9/11 tragedy, Canadians have awakened to the fact that we are woefully unprepared for the uncertainty of our times, and are now urging the government to rebuild our armed forces. Some seem to think we can leave our national security to the United States, a view not shared by the Americans or a majority of Canadians.

43. *N.B.: When you sit down with your grandchild how do you begin to try to make sense of the experience of Hong Kong?*

G.M.: I tell my grandchild that when the whole Western world was threatened by a dictator name Hitler, Canadians, along with others, decided to oppose him. Sending soldiers to Hong Kong was a serious military blunder made by the politicians. Despite that, the Canadians acquitted themselves with honour and distinction. I tell him he should be proud of the fact that these soldiers behaved with courage, and loyalty, and they never gave up. They volunteered to serve, and we should never forget them.



LESSON TEN

THE LESSON AND LEGACY OF HONG KONG

INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

Hong Kong speaks many lessons, but only if we listen sensitively and carefully. For us to gain collectively from the tragic experience, we must do a number of things. First, we must know exactly what happened. That is perhaps the easiest part of our task. The story is well documented – how almost two thousand Canadians were sent by their government for dubious reasons at best - to defend what was basically an indefensible position. They were, to put it generously, poorly trained and ill-equipped. Their defeat, after a gallant and heroic defense, was almost a forgone conclusion. Close to three hundred soldiers died. However, that was merely the first stage of the tragedy. The next was the brutal conditions in the Japanese POW camps wherein the Canadians suffered – and died – under a repressive and illegal regime of hard work, filthy conditions, meagre rations, grossly inadequate medical care, and torture.

Knowing what happened is merely the first essential part. The next is analyzing and understanding why it happened. Why did the Canadian government acquiesce, with scant investigation, to the altered British policy of sending soldiers to the colony at Hong Kong? How were those troops selected and why were they sent untrained, unprepared, and poorly equipped? How did such a tragedy occur? Who was responsible? Who was to blame? Who is to be held accountable? What would constitute adequate redress? Knowing why the tragedy occurred allows us to move to a higher level of understanding.

But knowing what happened and why it occurred is still not enough. We need to appreciate the significance of Hong Kong. We need to learn from it and apply it in



other situations. Further, we need to pass on the knowledge and understanding to other generations. In short, we need to learn fully “the lesson of history” Hong Kong provides. In so doing, we not only improve our own lives and reduce the threat of a reoccurrence of such a tragedy, but we also keep faith with those who gave their lives and those that suffered in Hong Kong. If we do all those things, sacrifices will not have been in vain. Rather, the deaths and suffering will have been for some purpose. We will live our values, not only in our words but also our actions.

“Take these men for your example. Like them, remember that Prosperity can only be for the free. That freedom is the sure possession of those alone who have the courage to defend it.”

- from Pericles’ funeral oration to the Athenians in 431 B.C.

This lesson, the final one of the unit, examines “the big picture” and attempts to synthesize what has come before, as well as pointing the way to the future. The title, “The Lessons and Legacy of Hong Kong” is apt as both a sense of closure as well as a point of departure.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- to have students synthesize their understanding
- to have students communicate and convey their understanding
- to have students examine “the big picture” associated with Hong Kong
- to increase students’ sense of civic responsibility
- to have students understand the concept of the rules of war
- to have students improve their writing and arguing skills

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

1. Have students research, through an Internet search, the Geneva Convention of 1864, the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, and the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, 1929. If that is not possible, provide photocopies of pages 42 to 48 of the B.C. Resource Guide for Teachers for Human Rights in the Asia Pacific 1931-1945.

2. If either of the above suggestions is impossible, refer to the Resource section below.

3. Have students read the relevant rules of the conduct of war and the treatment of prisoners of war.

4. Have them explain those rules by writing them in their own words.

5. Conduct a mock war crimes trial. This should begin with the writing of the actual indictment against the Government of Japan for the period from 1941 to 1945, relative to Hong Kong.

6. One third of the class should then be assigned the role of the defense. One third should be assigned the role of the prosecution. The remaining third should be divided in half. One half should form the judge’s panel. The other half should be members of the press.

7. The defense and prosecution should prepare and organize their evidence. While they are doing that, the judges should prepare an exact rendering of the pertinent laws in the case as well as reviewing the major historical and legal points that they expect to hear in the upcoming case. The press should write articles that would appear prior to such a case.

8. Conduct and convene the case. It should begin with the prosecution side making its opening statement, followed by the defense with its opening statement. Then, the prosecution should call witnesses, introduce exhibits, and provide evidence to prove its side of the indictment. The judges can question and examine as they see fit. The defense should then present its case in the same way as the prosecution has already done. Once again, the judges may question and examine.

9. Closing statements are then delivered, first by the prosecution and then by the defense.

10. The press should write a second series of articles covering the actual conduct of the trial.

11. The judges retire to deliberate their verdict. They must decide solely on the presentation of the evidence that they have just heard.

12. They should then write out their verdict, along with the reasoning and rationale underlying that verdict.



13. The press should write a third and final set of articles about the verdict and its significance.

THOUGHT/DISCUSSION/ RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. List the lessons that should be learned by Canada from the experience of Hong Kong.
2. Research the Nuremberg War Crime Trials that followed World War II in Europe.
3. Is it possible, realistically, to have "rules of war"? Why, or why not?
4. Why do you think Canada has been slow, and reluctant to learn, in applying the lessons of Hong Kong?
5. Have you ever in your previous educational experience learned anything about Canada's role in Hong Kong from 1941 to 1945? Why do you think that is the case? What do you think is the significance?
6. Write a eulogy for the Canadian "unknown soldier" of Hong Kong.
7. Write a letter to the current Canadian government outlining your thoughts on Canada's role in Hong Kong from 1941 to 1945, advocating what should be done and explaining why.
8. Write the same kind of letter to the current Japanese government.
9. Write a song or poem dedicated to the Canadian soldiers of Hong Kong.
10. If you were apportioning blame for what happened to Canadians in Hong Kong between 1941 and 1945, who would it be? Justify, with evidence, and reasons for your choice.
11. Can the Canadian experience in Hong Kong during World War Two truly be called a "tragedy?" Why, or why not? Has anything that has been done, or not done, since that time made the tragedy worse? Explain.
12. What do you think should and could be done to show that this generation has really learned the lesson of Hong Kong? What specifically can you do?

RESOURCES

Rules of War

1864 – The Geneva Convention of 1864 established the International Red Cross and laid down the rules for the treatment of the wounded in war.

1899 & 1907 – From The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 that established as international law many of the customary laws of war that existed prior to World War I.

"...the inhabitants and belligerents remain under the protection and the rule of the principles of the law of nations, as they result from the usages established among civilized peoples, from the laws of humanity, and the dictates of the public conscience.

Article 3: a belligerent part which violates the provisions of the said Regulations shall, if the case demands, be liable to pay compensation. It shall be





responsible for the acts committed by persons forming part of its armed forces.”

October 18, 1907 – From the Annex to Hague IV (of 1907)

Article 4: Prisoners of war are in the power of the hostile Government, but not of the individuals or corps who capture them. They must be humanely treated. All their personal belongings, except arms, horses, and military papers, remain their property.

Article 6: The State may utilize the labour of prisoners-of-war [sic] according to their rank and aptitude, except officers. The tasks shall not be excessive and shall have no connection with the operations of the war.

Work done for the State is paid for at the rates in force for work of a similar kind done by soldiers of the national army, or, if there are none in force, at a rate according to the work executed.

The wages of the prisoners shall go towards improving their position, and the balance shall be paid them on their release, after deducting the cost of the maintenance.

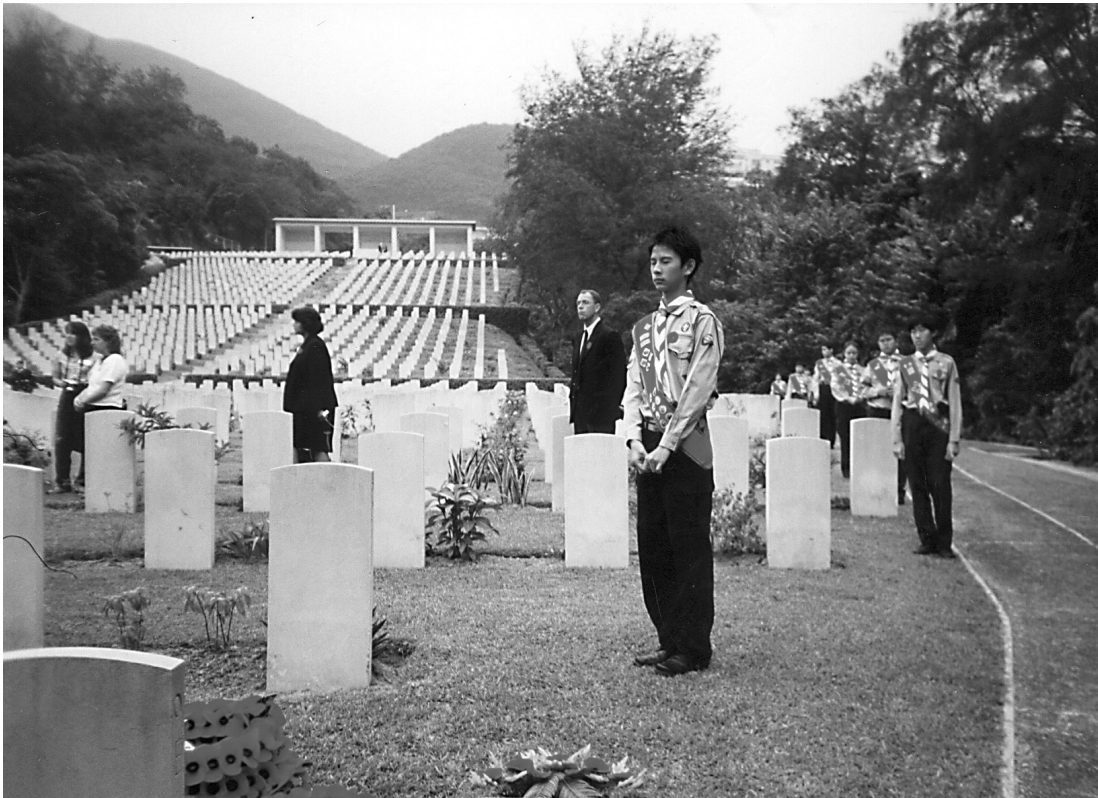
Refinement of the Rules of War

July 27, 1929 – From the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners-of-War[sic]

Article 2: Prisoners-of-war [sic] are in the power of the hostile Government, but not of the individuals or formation which captured them. They shall at all times be humanely treated and protected, particularly against acts of violence, from insults and from public curiosity. Measures of reprisal against them are forbidden.

August 8, 1945 – From the Charter of the International Military Tribunal

(b) War crimes: Violations of the laws or customs of war include, but are not limited to, murder, ill-treatment or deportation to slave-labour or for any other purpose of the civilian population of, or in occupied territory, murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war, of persons on the seas, killing of hostages, plunder of public or private property, wanton destruction of cities, towns, or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity.



Sai Wan Cemetery on Hong Kong Island: The cemetery from two different vantage points in the year 2000. The Chinese Scouts of Hong Kong have pledged to look after the graves of the Canadians in perpetuity (2 pictures on loan from “Flash” Clayton)



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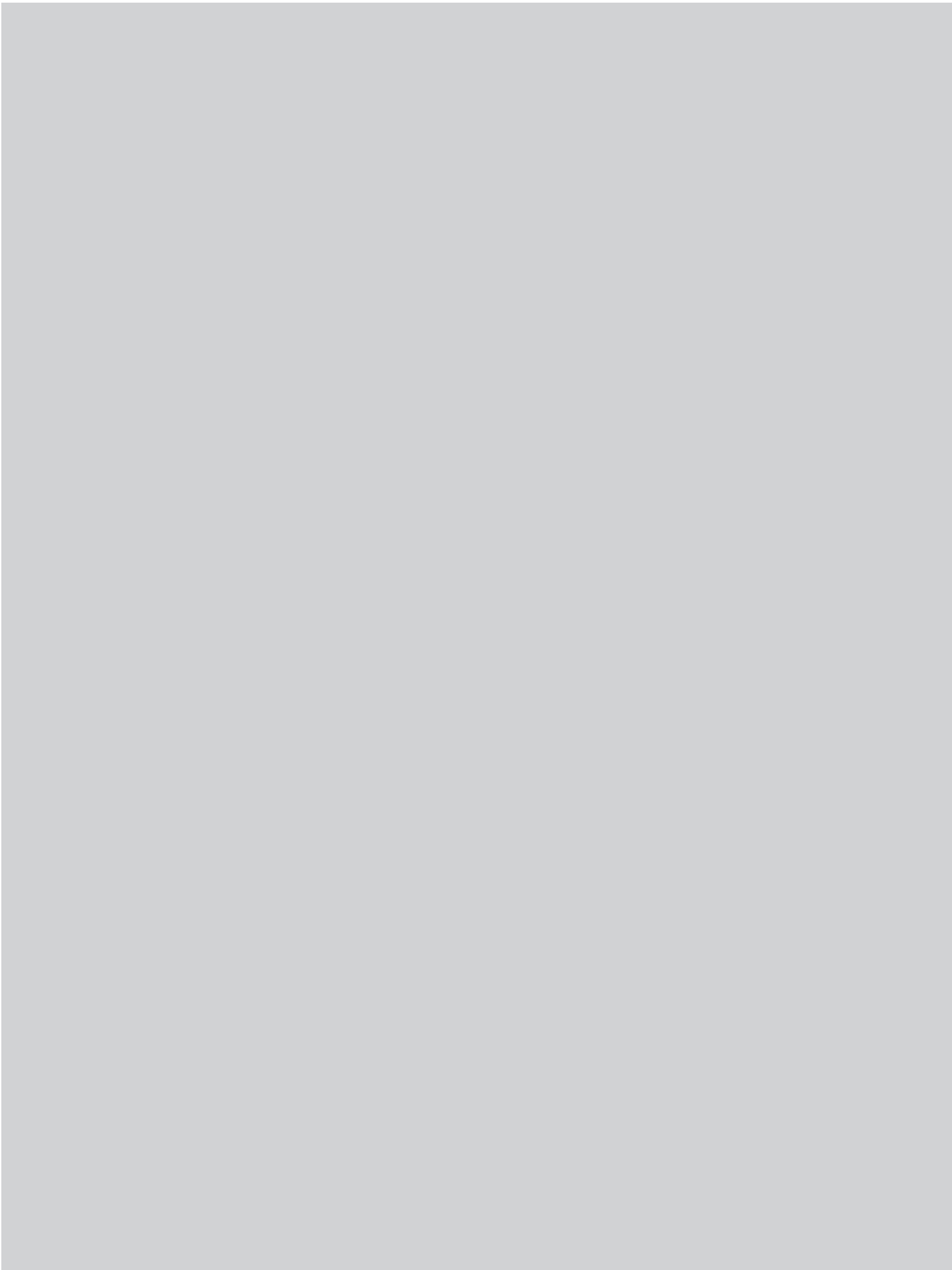
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THE FORGOTTEN HEROES

TEN SELECTED LESSON PLANS

