WWI- Air, Sea, Land

* War in the Air

Canadians in the Air:

* Wright Brothers airplane in 1903
* **WWI was the first use of airplanes in combat**
* **Canada had no air force so Canadians had to join the British Corps to fly**
  + By 1918, 40% of the British air force pilots were Canadians
* **Young men joined the air force because there was more glory associated with it compared to trench warfare**
* Germany had a greater number of planes
* War in the Air

Development of Air Fighting Techniques:

* First airplanes were used as scouts/ for reconnaissance
* **Dogfights**: aerial duels between pilots
  + planes try to get the better position by getting behind the enemy
  + No parachutes yet
* First machine guns on planes were timed to fire between the propeller blades
  + Machine gun is attached to the cam of the propeller engine
  + Started with pilots carrying rifles
* Bombing began as pilots carried bombs on their laps and threw them over the open cockpit
  + Not a major part of WWI

Role of the pilot:

* Pilots built a reputation based on their abilities to manoeuver in the air
* **Ace**: a pilot who destroyed 5+ enemies
  + **Victoria Cross**: British award for military bravery and courage
* Many pilot casualties were due to mechanical failure
* 1916, the average life of a pilot was 3 weeks

**Billy Bishop**

* Canada’s top ace
* Shot down 72 enemy planes
* Awarded Victoria Cross
* Fought the Red Baron and survived
* WWII he would recruit and train pilots

**The Red Baron (Manfred von Richthofen)**

* Commander of the German Flying Circus - made of top pilots
* Shot down about 80 Allied planes
* Shot down April 21st, 1918
* Who shot down the Red Baron?

You guessed it:

A Canadian!

**Roy Brown**

* Started in 1917
* Stricken with illness a number of times
* ***Accredited*** for shooting down Von Richthofen
* Put on leave after shooting down Von Richthofen
* After the war he becomes an accountant
* War At Sea

**U-Boats**

* **German submarines that were highly effective at destroying British supply ships**
* First U-boats were used to ram enemy supply ships – then came the development of torpedoes
* Torpedoes were saved because they were rare still so the strategy was to surface and then fire
  + Therefore they were most effective against defenceless supply ships
* **British counter by sending convoys with the supply ships**

**Sinking of the Lusitania**:

* American supply ship headed for Liverpool from New York, disguised as a passenger ship
* Germany had declared an all out sea war against Britain, not the US
* 1915, a German U-boat launches a torpedo and sinks the Lusitania
* On board were British, Canadian and American passengers
  + Germans found out *afterwards* that it was also carrying ammunition
* Germans didn’t feel ready to take on US and Britain at the same time so they gave into American demands to suspend their U-boat operations
  + Full sea war against Britain and neutrals (USA) around Britain resumed in 1917
* One reason for Americans to want to enter the war in 1917

**Canadians at Sea – Halifax**:

* Becomes the Allied refuelling base for battleships because of its protected harbour
* Major port for shipping troops over to Britain/France
* **Halifax Explosion** Dec 6, 1917
* *Mont Blanc* carrying:
  + 2300 tons of wet and dry picric acid
  + 200 tons of TNT
  + 35 tons of benzol (stored on the open decks)
  + 10 tons of gun cotton
* *Imo* is on the wrong course and turns into the *Mont Blanc*
  + one of the *Mont Blanc*'s guns flew over 3.5 miles to Dartmouth
  + An anchor, weighing 1140lbs. Landed 2 miles away at Armdale
* Halifax Explosion
* 1600 men, women and children killed
* 9000 people were injured
* 25,000 buildings spread over 325 acres destroyed

The War on Land

* Trench Warfare
* New to wars
  + previously wars were fought with cavalry and infantry and depended on close combat
* New advances in machine guns and rifles meant that soldiers didn’t need to be up close anymore, therefore trenches were built
* The war becomes a battle of **attrition (stalemate)**
* Trenches were good defence against enemy fire
* **But the dead were left to rot in the trenches**
  + **Rats, lice, disease, trench foot**
* You couldn’t advance because if you left the trench (“going over the top”) you would get shot
* If you didn’t get shot, there was **No Man’s Land** between the two trenches which were filled with mines and barbed wire.
* If you made it past No Man’s Land, trenches were built in zigzag formations so you couldn’t just go in and start shooting
* You could also die from grenades, snipers, shrapnel, gas attacks (supposed to be outlawed)