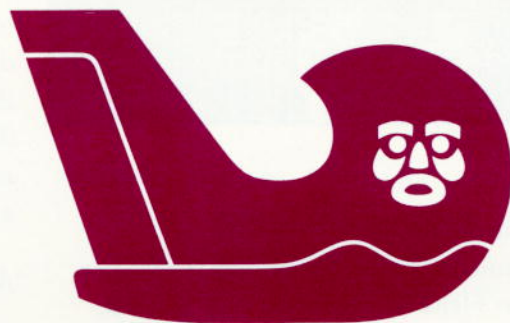


Adventures in History



Bravery in the Field

Teachers' Guide



**National
Film Board
of Canada**

**Office
national du film
du Canada**

Bravery in the Field



Level

Junior and Senior Secondary

Subject Area

Canadian History, World History,
Social Studies

Summary

This film explores the sacrifices made in World War II and their relevance for today's young people. Tommy, an aging veteran who lost a leg at Dieppe, leads a marginal existence from pension cheque to pension cheque, drinking too much and sometimes remembering too vividly the horrors of his war experiences. When his cheque is late, he pawns his service medals and is offered only \$2.00 a piece for them, but \$5.00 for the one for "bravery in the field."

Tommy's spirit has not altogether been broken by neglect, however. When three young men, "punks" as he calls them, attempt to steal a Legion poppy seller's money box,

he chases them off and saves the money. These young men lead a life as bleak as Tommy's. Out of work, homeless, they drift from park bench to vacant lot, sniffing glue and subsisting on hustling change and petty crime.

One night, as Tommy leaves the Legion Hall, the three attack him and steal his money and the medals he has just redeemed from the pawnshop. Though Tommy puts up a good fight and even succeeds in breaking the nose of one of the "punks," Lennie, he is badly beaten. Both Lennie and Tommy wind up in the emergency ward of the same hospital. Tommy is delirious and relives the battle in which he lost a leg. Lennie listens to him in mounting horror, realizing at once the depths of his own degradation in attacking a crippled man. He is moved by the recognition of the value of Tommy's early sacrifice, which reveals him as something more than the contemptible old boozier Lennie had imagined.

Out of the hospital, Lennie cannot dismiss Tommy from his mind. He decides to return the stolen medals to Tommy and seeks him out in his furnished room. Rather weakly, he tries to justify himself to Tommy, explaining that he has no job, no family, and no money. Tommy is scornful. Neither has he.

Both go to the Remembrance Day parade, Tommy proud and dignified, wearing his medals, Lennie as part of the crowd. As the camera pans from face to face, from old to young, from veterans to war widows to honor guard, we realize that despite the nation's failure to revere its war heroes sufficiently, despite the barrenness of Tommy's old age, what he and his comrades did retains a value which dignifies Tommy's life.

Aims of the Film

- To explore the relevance of World War II to the present generation.
- To examine the effects of war on the veteran.
- To show that the problems of life are similar for young and old alike.
- To highlight the significance of Remembrance Day.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does the war appear to lack all meaning for Lennie? Why do Lennie and his friends make fun of the symbols of war which mean so much to Tommy?
2. Tommy lost a leg in battle. Do you think he may have suffered in any other way because of the war?
3. When Tommy is listening to the news broadcast he turns it off in disgust calling it a "replay." What angered him? What does it remind him of?

4. Why does Lennie refuse to take his share of the loot from the robbery?
5. In what ways are the lives of Tommy and Lennie similar? How do they differ?
6. Discuss the probable future effect on Lennie of meeting Tommy.

Related Projects

1. Find out why the Dieppe Raid is still a controversial topic in Canadian history.
2. Research the events leading to World War II and try to discover why so many Canadians volunteered for service.
3. What is the role of the military in Canada today? . . . in the World?
4. During Remembrance Day celebrations in the film many women were dressed in military uniforms. What part did Canadian women play in the war?

Bibliography

- Birney, Earle. *Turvey*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1957. New Canadian Library.
- Braithwaite, Max. *The Hungry Thirties 1930/1940*. Canada's Illustrated Heritage. Toronto: Natural Science of Canada Limited, 1977.
- Broadfoot, Barry. *Six War Years 1939-1945*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1974.*
- Douglas, W.A.B. and Brereton Greenhous. *Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Franklin, Stephen. *A Time for Heroes 1940/1950*. Canada's Illustrated Heritage. Toronto: Natural Science of Canada Limited, 1977.
- Leasor, James. *Green Beach*. London: Heinemann, 1975.
- Mowat, Farley. *The Regiment*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1955.*
- Munro, Ross. *Gauntlet to Overlord*. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1970.
- Robertson, Terence. *Dieppe, the Shame and the Glory*. London: Hutchinson, 1963.

*Paperback edition

Related Films from the NFB

- Canada in World War One*
16:00 106B 0162 048
- Canada Between Two World Wars*
21:00 106B 0163 040
- The War Is Over*
27:57 106B 0164 063
- Canada at War Series* — 13 films
27:46 each
- Fields of Sacrifice*
38:13 106C 0164 018
- For King and Country (CBC)*
56:55 106C 0176 096

One of the most difficult tasks confronting the teacher of history or social studies is that of demonstrating the relevance of the past to the present lives of the students. The **Adventures in History** series has been designed to provide, in a lively, fictional form, a bridge to Canada's past.

Although founded on sound research, the series does not attempt to document specific events or the lives of famous people. Instead it concentrates on the effects of periods of broad social change on the lives of ordinary persons, especially young people. Each half-hour drama provides the teacher with the opportunity to encourage the class to become imaginatively involved with characters whose lives are touched by these social changes, and to develop the capacity to view the subject from a critical perspective.

The **Adventures in History** series is a continuing project which, upon completion, will touch on virtually every aspect of Canada's recent past.

History Consultant:

Terence Brennan, member, Canadian Historical Association Council; and Chairman, History Department, Loyola High School, Montreal.

Writer:

Yvonne Matthews Klein, Professor of English, Dawson College, Montreal.

Support material for "Adventures in History" series coordinated by Ann Pearson, NFB.