



**SUPPLY  
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# Museum in the Classroom

## Overview

This lesson gives you tools to create a mini-museum in your classroom. Using objects, images, archival material and personal stories, students will build exhibitions about Canada and the Second World War.

## Grade Levels

Grades 4 to 12; Elementary Cycles 2 and 3, and Secondary 1 to 5 in Quebec

## Estimated Time

1 to 4 class periods

## Curriculum Connections

Social studies, history, language, media arts

## Historical Thinking Concepts

- **Evaluating Evidence:** What can we tell about how people lived by examining the clues they left behind? What questions remain?
- **Historical Significance:** How do we decide which and whose stories to tell? What evidence do we use? What evidence do we leave out?
- **Historical Perspectives:** How can we better understand the people of the past? How do different people experience the same events?

## Objectives

- Use critical thinking and historical-inquiry skills to investigate Canada's participation in the Second World War
- Consider how primary sources can be interpreted to learn about the past
- Understand the role of exhibition teams in designing museum displays
- Work cooperatively to build exhibitions

## Materials Required

### From the Discovery Box:

- All artifacts
- All contextual images
- All artifact labels
- All artifact backgrounders

### From the Supply Line website or the USB key in the discovery box:

- Thematic overviews
- Personal stories
- Archival material
- Photocopies of worksheets

### Additional supplies:

- Art materials – crayons, coloured pencils, coloured markers, scissors, glue, tape, etc.

## Handling the Objects

Some of the objects in the Second World War Discovery Box were made or used during the war, more than 75 years ago. Others are reproductions made recently, based on actual items from that time.

You and your students are free to touch and examine all the objects and try on the clothing. Remember, however, that the objects, whether authentic artifacts or reproductions, are valuable and breakable. **Please handle them with care.**

## Please Note:

1. This lesson provides options for customization and alternatives for different grade levels. The level of complexity depends on time, resources and curriculum. Feel free to modify or mix and match activities to suit the needs of your class.
2. Please do not cut, glue or alter any objects in the Second World War Discovery Box. Feel free, however, to scan, print or photocopy any of the materials. All content can also be found at [www.warmuseum.ca/supplyline](http://www.warmuseum.ca/supplyline) or on the USB key supplied with the discovery box.

## Part A: Introduction

Start with a conversation about museums. If appropriate, ask students to describe their favourite museums. What do they like about going there?

At the Canadian War Museum, our mission is to promote public understanding of Canada's military history, emphasizing the human experience of war. We do this in our main galleries, and through special exhibitions and programs. Today, your students will become exhibition developers.

**A museum exhibition communicates an idea or message. It uses objects, images, stories and interactive experiences to connect with visitors.**

As a class, discuss the process involved in developing a museum exhibition.

- **Exhibition development relies on teamwork**  
An exhibition is usually created by a team of people whose members have their own areas of expertise and specific role. In large institutions, teams may be quite large. In small museums, one person may take on multiple jobs. For this lesson, we've identified key roles involved in exhibition development.

You may choose to assign roles, allow students to choose, or suggest they share roles as a team.

- **Historian or curator** – Selects objects and images, and writes exhibition text.
- **Designer** – Decides how the exhibition will look, including colours and lighting used.
- **Marketer** – Promotes and advertises the exhibition.
- **Builder** – Makes exhibition structures, such as display panels.
- **Conservator or object specialist** – Responsible for the safe handling and display of exhibition objects. May also create mounts or stands for objects, graphics and text.
- **Educator or tour guide** – Greets visitors and guides them through the exhibition. May also design activities to encourage learning.

- **Exhibitions are created with a target audience in mind.**

This influences all planning decisions. Will the exhibition be for children? Members of the community? Tourists who know very little about your town or topic? Think about the needs and abilities of your audience when planning your exhibitions.

- **Exhibitions have a main message.**

For this lesson, you can use a pre-determined message or develop your own. See suggested options in Appendix B. The main message is the exhibition team's starting point. This "big idea" helps shape the exhibition: whose stories to tell, which artifacts to choose, what the visitor experience should feel like, etc. The "big idea" also helps the team decide what to leave out.

- **Exhibition teams make choices about what to include.**

Artifacts and images, when considered within their historical period, can help us understand the past. They provide clues about people's experiences. A historian looks at these clues – including written documents such as diaries, visual documents such as art and photographs, and material culture such as clothing and equipment – to figure out what people did in the past and how they did it. The historian decides which clues matter and which do not, depending on the exhibition's message, and what would be most interesting to visitors.

- **A well-designed exhibition is a pleasure to visit.**

Think about the needs of your visitors. How and where you display information is almost as important as what you choose to share. Make sure that nothing is placed too high or too low. Text and images should be big enough to be seen from a distance. Ideas should be organized and described in short, simple sentences and paragraphs. Too much information can overload visitors.

- **Interactive elements and special programs are a great way to engage visitors.**

Think creatively about additional ways to connect with visitors. Could you make a quiz or invent a game? Could visitors maybe try on clothing or (safely!) touch an object? Would a guided tour work? Could you add sound effects? Everyone learns differently. Your exhibition will be even more successful if you use a variety of ways of presenting your ideas and content.

## Part B: Research and Exhibition Planning

### **Option 1: Create an exhibition organized around individual Canadians and their experiences during the Second World War (suggested for elementary students).**

This option does not require students to have studied the Second World War. The personal-stories approach offers an introduction to the events. However, you may choose to read the thematic overviews to brush up on key events with your students.

**Exhibition Message:** The Second World War affected all Canadians and changed many lives.

Divide students into groups of three or four and distribute copies of Worksheet 1 (Option 1 – Exhibition Planning).

Ask each group to choose one personal story (see Appendix B), or choose one for them.

Ask each group to choose three items to help tell that story:

- One artifact
- One contextual image
- One archival source

Have students complete the worksheet.

### **Please Note:**

1. Artifacts may be interpreted in a variety of ways. If more than one group would like to use the same object, they may share or take turns.
2. In museum collections, almost every artifact has a “provenance” – a record of its origins, ownership and history. Objects in the Second World War Discovery Box, however, are reproductions or authentic items from unknown donors. It is completely appropriate for students to use “historical imagination” to interpret the objects as representing the people featured in their exhibitions.

## **Option 2: Create a thematically organized exhibition exploring the contributions of Canada and Canadians during the Second World War (suggested for high school students).**

This option assumes that your class has a general awareness of Canada's involvement in the Second World War. You may choose to use the thematic overviews (available at [www.warmuseum.ca/supplyline](http://www.warmuseum.ca/supplyline) or on the USB key provided with the discovery box) as a review before starting.

Distribute copies of Worksheet 2 (Option 2 – Exhibition Planning).

As a class, generate a list of main messages / big ideas for the exhibitions the students will create or choose some from our list of suggestions (see Appendix C).

Divide students into groups of three or four and assign a different main message to each group, or allow them to choose.

Instruct students to explore the following resources with their message in mind:

- Artifacts (with corresponding labels and backgrounders)
- Images
- Thematic overviews
- Personal stories
- Archival material
- Optional: other sources available in your classroom (Internet research, reference books, etc.)

From those resources, groups should choose five items for their exhibition. There should be a mix of:

- artifacts
- visual content (e.g., period photographs of the place, archival sources, works of art and photographs of the individuals featured in the personal stories)

### **Please Note:**

1. Artifacts may be interpreted in a variety of ways. If more than one group would like to use the same object, they may share or take turns.
2. In museum collections, almost every artifact has a “provenance” – a record of its origins, ownership and history. Objects in the Second World War Discovery Box, however, are reproductions or authentic items from unknown donors. It is completely appropriate for students to use “historical imagination” to interpret the objects as representing the people featured in their exhibitions.
3. It may be challenging to find objects to represent certain themes. In particular, experiences related to the Holocaust and the forced relocation of Japanese Canadians are difficult to describe with objects alone because relatively few items have survived or made their way into museum collections. These are important aspects of the war but must be approached with sensitivity.

## Part C: Exhibition Design

Once groups have selected source materials, they can create their exhibitions.

Distribute Appendix A (Exhibition Labels).

Students will work together to organize their artifacts, images and archival sources.

Ask them to:

- make a sketch of the exhibition layout;
- consider how artifacts, images and text will be displayed.

Have students write labels for their exhibition (see Appendix A for suggestions). Remind them that less is more when writing exhibition text. Visitors have a lot to take in: artifacts, images, text. You want them to be able to get the important information quickly and easily. This is a great opportunity to talk to your students about the editing process.

## Part D: Presentation

This step can be simple (presentations to the class) or elaborate (invite other classes and guests to attend the presentations and tour the exhibitions).

Each group should be prepared to discuss their exhibition and answer questions about the objects and other sources they used.

## Suggestions for Assessment

Did students design their exhibitions with their target audience(s) in mind? Did they effectively communicate the main message? Were their reasons for choosing various resources clear and well thought-out? Did they share ideas and respect the contributions of their team members? Did they demonstrate good writing skills? Did they produce an effective exhibition?

## Extension Activities

- Think local – Consider adding content about your town’s involvement in the Second World War.
- Plan an exhibition opening – Create posters, make invitations for special guests, prepare for guided tours. Show off your great work.
- Create short scripts based on personal stories and perform them.

## Worksheets

1. Option 1 (Personal Story) – Exhibition Planning  
Option 1 (Personal Story) – Exhibition Planning Blackline Master
2. Option 2 (Thematic) – Exhibition Planning  
Option 2 (Thematic) – Exhibition Planning Blackline Master

## Appendices

- Appendix A: Exhibition Labels
- Appendix B: Personal Stories
- Appendix C: Suggested Exhibition Messages

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# Option 1 – Exhibition Planning

Identify the role of each exhibition team member.

Name:	Job Title:

Complete the sections below to plan your exhibition.

**A. Identify Your Target Audience(s)**

What is the approximate age range of your visitors?

How much do they already know about the subject of your exhibition? A lot or nothing at all?

List any special requirements they may have.  
For example: Can they read English easily? Do they have limited time to visit?

**B. About the Personal Story**

Person's name:

How old was the person when the war began?

Where did the person live, work or travel during the war?

What was the person's job or role during the war?

List one interesting fact about the person.

**C. List the three supporting materials you've chosen to tell your story.**

Artifact:

Image:

Archival source:

## **D. Develop Your Exhibition Text**

### **Exhibition Title (1-5 words):**

A strong exhibition title is short. It attracts a visitor's attention and interest.

### **Exhibition Text (maximum 50 words):**

Stick to what is most interesting and important. What information will be interesting to your visitors? Think of the experiences of the person you chose. What do they teach us about what life was like for Canadians during the Second World War?

### **Artifact or Image Labels (maximum 25 words):**

It is important to provide essential information on the object, image and archival source you chose. What is it? Where does it come from?

Artifact:

Image:

Archival source:

## **E. Design Your Exhibition**

Make a sketch of your display. Where will you put the images, text and object?  
Think about the colours and materials you would like to use.



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## Option 2 – Exhibition Planning

Identify the role of each exhibition team member.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Complete the sections below to plan your exhibition.

### **A. Exhibition Message**

Remember that the exhibition message is your “big idea”.  
It will guide the content you choose for your exhibition.

**B. Identify Your Target Audience(s)**

What is the approximate age range of your visitors?

How much do they already know about the subject of your exhibition? A lot or nothing at all?

List any special requirements they may have.

For example: Can they read English easily? Do they have limited time to visit?

**C. Research**

Consider the objects, images, archival sources and other materials you may have available in your classroom or the community.

Choose five items to display in your exhibition and list them below.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

## **D. Develop Your Exhibition Text**

### **Exhibition Title (1-5 words):**

A strong exhibition title is short. It attracts a visitor's attention and interest.

### **Exhibition Text (maximum 50 words):**

Stick to what is most interesting and important. What information will be interesting to your visitors? Think of the experiences of the person you chose. What do they teach us about what life was like for Canadians during the Second World War?

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Artifact:

Image:

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## **E. Design Your Exhibition**

Make a sketch of your display. Where will you put the images, text and object?  
Think about the colours and materials you would like to use.



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# Appendix A: Exhibition Labels

Use the label template below or design your own labels. Add the labels to your exhibition.





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## Appendix B: Personal Stories

Henry and Charles Byce  
Alexander “Alex” Railton Campbell  
Mary Adelaide “Addie” Cooney  
Jean Pierre Antoine Normandin  
Percy Wilmot

Joseph Bertrand Alphonse Benoit  
George William Boyer  
Robert Bush and Evangeline Harrold Bush  
Somerset Oscar James  
William King Lowd Lore

Allan Selwyn Bundy  
George Joseph Chequer  
Margaret Pictou Labillois  
Norma Etta Lee  
Guy Henri Rainville  
Ken Len Douglas “Doug” Sam

Frances Emma Caddy  
Joan Bamford Fletcher  
Minnie Eleanor Gray  
Lorna Stanger  
Wilhelmina “Willa” Walker

Verda Sharp Cook  
Nora Gibson and John “Jock” Elrick  
Lorida Landry Langlois  
Elmon Lichti  
Inge Oswald  
Albert Socqué

Kate Aitken  
Elizabeth “Betty” Butcher  
Barbara McNutt  
René Morin  
Alta Wilkinson

Michiko Ishii Ayukawa  
Masumi Mitsui  
Thomas Kunito “Tommy” Shoyama

Aba Bayefsky  
Keith MacLellan  
Zajderman Family

Full stories for the people on this list can be found on the USB key provided with the discovery box or at [www.warmuseum.ca/supplyline](http://www.warmuseum.ca/supplyline).





## Appendix C: Suggested Exhibition Messages

**Choose exhibition messages from the list below or create your own.**

- The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan was “the most essential military action that Canada could undertake”.
- Combat in the Second World War was a devastating human experience.
- Navy convoys were the lifeline of the Atlantic.
- Defeating Germany required a land invasion of western Europe, so Canadian and Allied soldiers fought through Sicily and up the Italian peninsula, later fighting in Normandy and the Netherlands.
- When Japan attacked Hawaii in December 1941, Canada feared a potential Japanese threat to its west coast.
- For Japanese Canadians, forced relocation was a devastating experience that had a lasting impact.
- Thousands of Canadian women served in uniform with one of the three branches of service: the army, navy and air force.
- Canada’s massive industrial and human mobilization involved Canadians of all ages in work, fundraising and rationing.
- Men and women worked side by side in factories across Canada.
- During the Second World War, about 9,000 Canadians endured harsh conditions as prisoners of war.
- Daily life for children in Canada was affected by the Second World War.
- Canada played a major role in the liberation of the Netherlands. Canadians celebrated VE Day (Victory in Europe) on May 8, 1945, after Germany’s surrender, and victory against Japan three months later.

