

Horsemen and Heroes – Cavalry, Colonialism, and the Canadian Hero Myth



FIGURE 1. ALFRED MUNNINGS, LORD STRATHCONA'S HORSE ON THE MARCH, 1918, OIL ON CANVAS. BEAVERBROOK COLLECTION OF WAR ART, CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM, OTTAWA.

Curriculum Connections

Aligned with Alberta ELA 10–12 outcomes:

Grade 10 ELA (-1/-2)	2.1.1 / 2.3.2	Interpret historical context and significance of nonprint texts like paintings and artifacts.
Grade 11 ELA (-1/-2)	2.2.2 / 2.3.2	Evaluate how visual techniques and emotional realism convey themes of war.
Grade 12 ELA (-1/-2)	2.3.3	Reflect on the artistic and rhetorical power of war remembrance.

Essential Inquiry Question

How do artistic representations and personal artifacts shape our understanding of war, and what are the implications of heroic narratives on collective memory?

Learning Objectives

- Interpret and respond to nonprint texts (paintings, artifacts) using literary and poetic language
- Analyze the use of symbolism, perspective, and tone in visual texts to create meaning
- Craft reflective, imaginative, or analytical writing that explores the emotional impact of war remembrance
- Apply context to deepen understanding of themes such as honour, sacrifice, and commemoration

ELA 10–12: Creative and Analytical Response Options

Choose one of the following:

- Creative Monologue – From the perspective of Flowerdew, a cavalry horse, Vaillancourt, or a modern farmer discovering Willoughby.
- Personal Response Essay – Analyze the Victoria Cross citation and painting to explore themes of duty and sacrifice.
- Artifact Poetry – Compose a poem inspired by one artifact and reflect on its meaning.

Resources

[Gordon Muriel Flowerdew- Government of Canada](#)

Citation

“For most conspicuous bravery and dash when in command of a squadron detailed for special service of a very important nature. On reaching the first objective, Lieutenant Flowerdew saw two lines of the enemy, each about sixty strong, with machine guns in the centre and flanks, one line being about two hundred yards behind the other. Realising the critical nature of the operation and how much depended upon it, Lieutenant Flowerdew ordered a troop under Lieutenant Harvey, V.C., to dismount and carry out a special movement while he led the remaining three troops to the charge. The squadron (less one troop) passed over both lines, killing many of the enemy with the sword; and wheeling about galloped at them again. Although the squadron had then lost about 70 per cent of its numbers, killed and wounded, from rifle and machine-gun fire directed on it from the front and both flanks, the enemy broke and retired. The survivors of the squadron then established themselves in a position where they were joined, after much hand-to-hand fighting, by Lieutenant Harvey’s party. Lieutenant Flowerdew was dangerously wounded through both thighs during the operation, but continued to cheer on his men. There can be no doubt that this officer’s great valour was the prime factor in the capture of the position.”

-(London Gazette, no.30648, 24 April 1918)

Suggested Sources

- Library & Archives Canada – [WWI diaries and war art materials](#)
- National Army Museum – [Feature on Alfred Munnings](#)
- [The Canadian Letters and Images Project](#)
- Willoughby and Vaillancourt artifact materials (badge, ID disc, photograph)

Rubric

ELA 10–12 Rubric (Creative & Analytical Writing)

Curricular Outcome & Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Developing	Beginning
2.1.1 – Comprehend and interpret visual texts	Insightfully interprets imagery and symbolism in both paintings and artifacts, demonstrating a nuanced understanding.	Clearly interprets key imagery and symbols, connecting to meaning with clarity.	Identifies basic elements of visual texts with limited explanation.	Struggles to interpret or reference visual details.
2.2.2 – Analyze creative techniques and emotional effect	Thoughtfully analyzes emotional tone and technique, using strong textual or visual evidence.	Provides a solid analysis of the emotional impact, supported by relevant examples.	Attempts to explore the emotional effect with limited development.	Minimal understanding of tone or technique.
2.3.3 – Create and communicate original work	Produces vivid, imaginative, and powerful writing with excellent structure and purpose.	Creates effective writing with a clear voice and structure.	Writing shows basic structure and some originality.	Writing lacks structure and creative voice.
3.3 – Reflect on ideas and develop insight	Demonstrates profound personal insight and effectively connects war memory to contemporary or emotional understanding.	Provides thoughtful reflection and shows emotional engagement.	Reflection is general or partially developed.	Little or no personal insight is evident.