

Mike Mountain Horse

History

Lesson 5 of an enquiry of 6 lessons

Enquiry: What do the stories of the 'often forgotten armies' reveal about the Western Front?





1914 1915 1916 1917 1918 1919



Situation in Spring 1917

The Battle of Verdun and Somme had come to an end. By this point both sides had suffered millions of deaths.

Russia was experiencing revolution and America joined the war in April.

But Spring 1917 still saw stalemate on the Western Front.



What does the story of Mike Mountain Horse reveal about the Western Front?

Weapons and technology	Military strategy
Treatment of troops and life on the front line	The psychological effects of war



The story of Mike Mountain Horse

Albert had been encouraged to join the army by a missionary called Samuel Middleton. After being told of her son's death, Albert's mother took a knife and tried to kill Middleton. She was dragged away by her other sons. At the funeral, the Bloods felt their warrior tradition reawaken:

'I felt a spirit of revenge as I gazed down on Albert lying in his coffin. Soon after, my brother and I, Joe Mountain Horse, and a number of Indian boys from neighbouring reserves, enlisted in the 191st Battalion for service overseas.'



The story of Mike Mountain Horse

Mike and Joe Mountain Horse arrived in France in 1917. In the woods behind the front lines, they prayed together. One of the Bloods, called George Strangling Wolf, took a knife and cut off a strip of flesh from around his knee. Holding up the bloody offering towards the sun, he prayed aloud: 'Help me, Sun, to survive this terrible war.' He then buried his flesh in the mud of northern France.

Strangling Wolf's official army records list his religion as 'Church of England', but he survived the war under the gaze of the Sun Spirit of his Blood ancestors.



The story of Mike Mountain Horse

Mike and Joe Mountain Horse fought at a fierce battle called Vimy Ridge. They fought again at the Battle of Cambrai (November 1917), which was the first mass tank attack in history. At one point during the battle, Mike was buried under rubble for four days. He survived, but he was later wounded. He was shipped to England to convalesce (get better). In 1919 he returned to the Blood Reserve in Canada with the Distinguished Conduct Medal on his chest.

Years later, Mike told the story of his Great War Deeds to a friend and artist, Ambrose Two Chiefs. Ambrose painted the story onto calfskin in the traditions of the Indians of the Great Plains.



Questions

1. Where was Mike Mountain Horse from?
2. Why did Mike Mountain Horse sign up to fight?
3. Which battles did Mike Mountain Horse take part in?
4. What piece of technology was first used in a mass attack in 1917?
5. What does Mike Mountain Horse's story reveal about the Western Front?



Learn more about Mike Mountain Horse

Search for MIKE MOUNTAIN HORSE - WAR STORIES 1917.ca
Documentary

1. What extra details did you find out about Mike's background or experience of war?
2. How could a historian use the war robe?
3. What else has been revealed about the Western Front?

