



Their Brothers' Voices: Using Archival Stories to Foster Empathy in Grade 8 Boys

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Further Information

This poster and further information is available at <http://www.theibsc.org/>

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Introduction

For Modern History students, two elements are converging to shape their understanding of war. Both the loss of direct contact with veterans and their stories, and the popularity of video games based on the narratives of war are having a significant effect on how boys are learning about the conflicts that have shaped our world. As a way of bringing new perspectives to their learning, 19 Grade 8 boys were given the opportunity in this project to learn about their Andean brothers who gave the ultimate sacrifice to ensure that we enjoy the freedoms we have today.

The Research Question

How might engaging with alumni stories foster empathy in Grade 8 boys towards the experiences of war?

Research Context and Participants

St. Andrew's College educates boys from Grades 5 - 12 in a suburban setting just north of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. It is a non-denominational school, with a mission to "develop the complete man, the well-rounded citizen." This research project engaged a Grade 8 History class in the study of their fallen brothers. These participants were chosen because they are required by Ministry guidelines to take History and have not yet been given the opportunity to self-identify as historians. We met twice weekly, both in the classroom and in the archives room at the college.

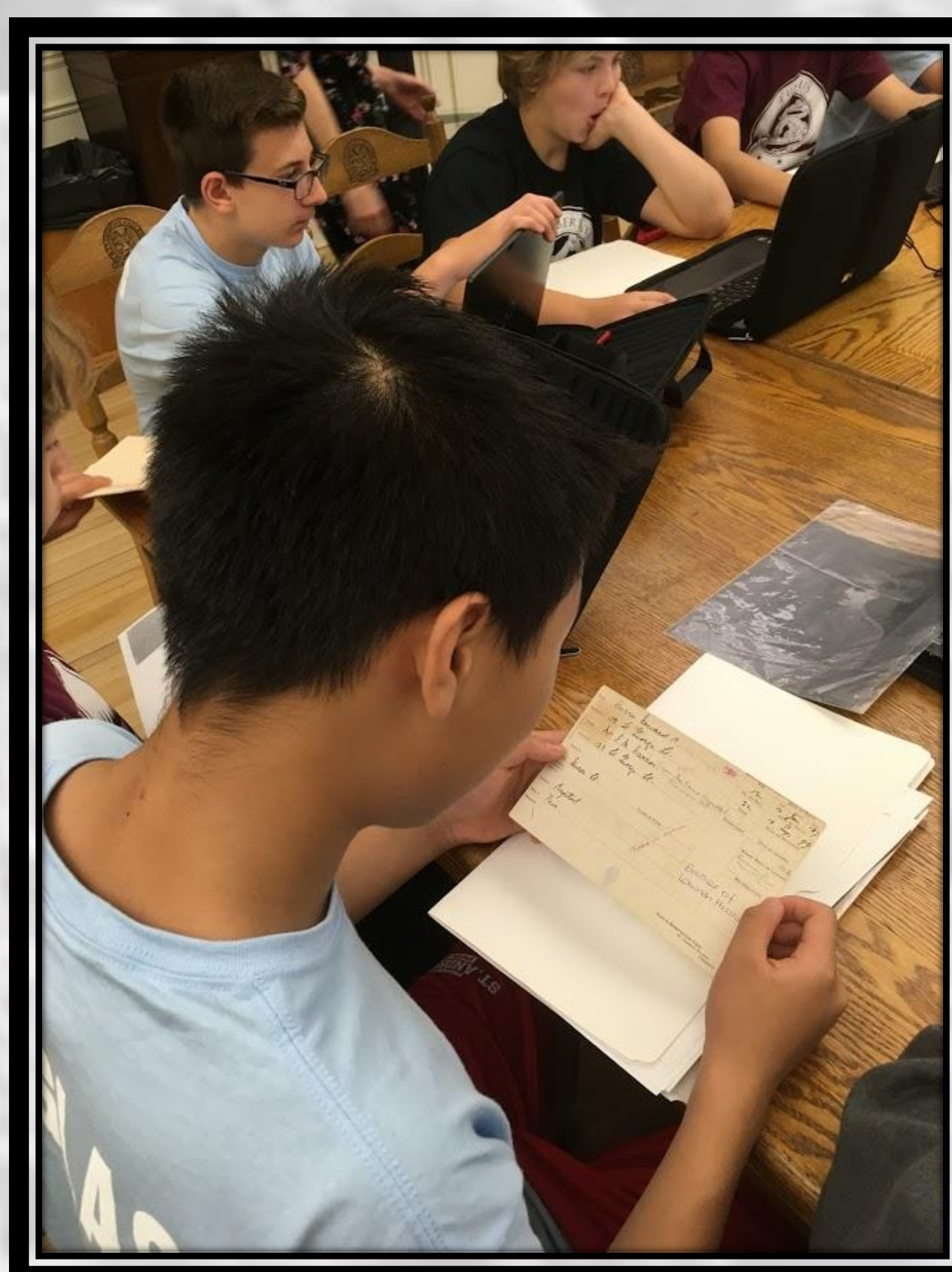
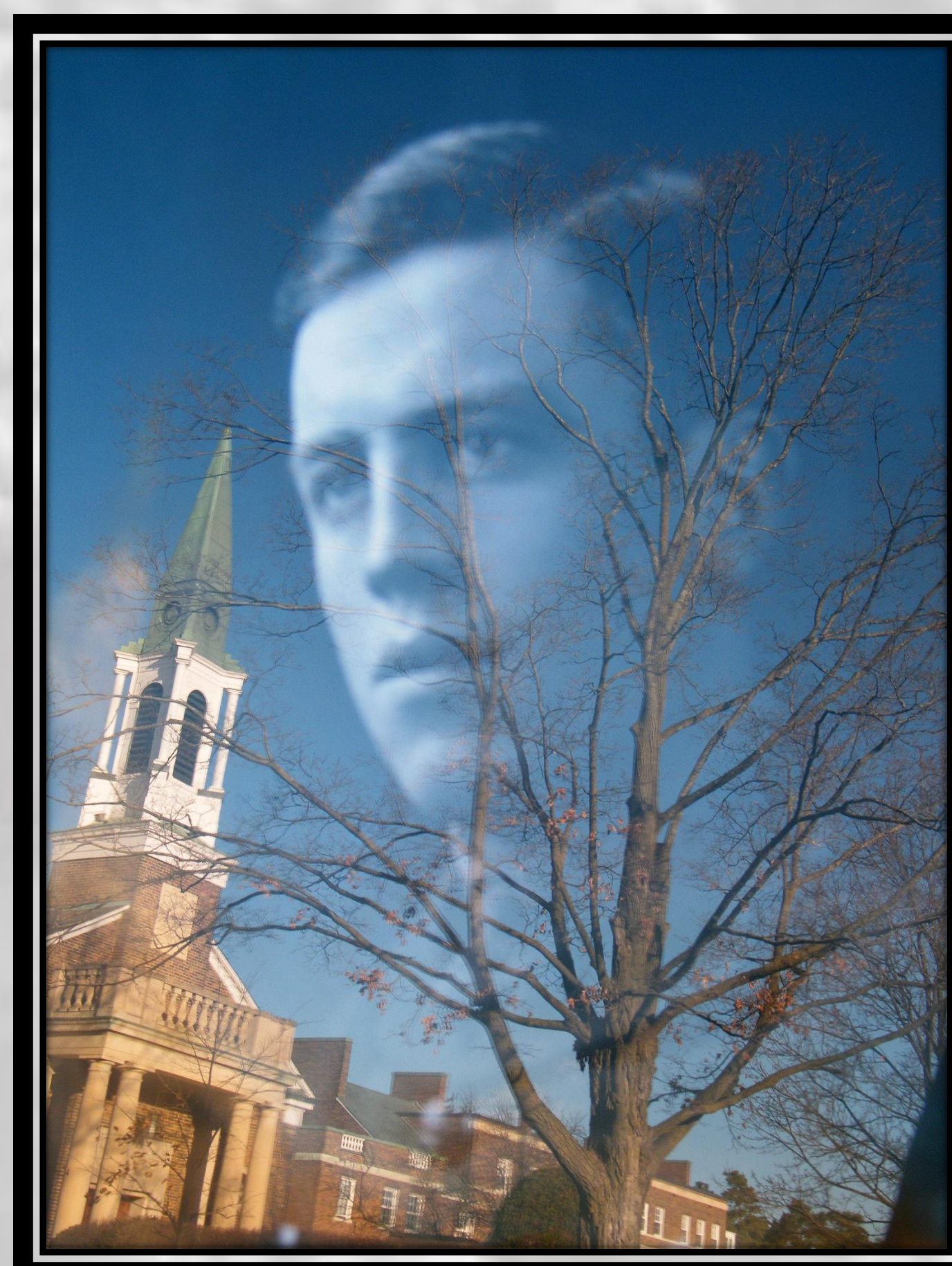


"I feel like I can connect with him."

"I am grateful."



"I feel inspired."



Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through surveys and student video journals. The surveys were useful in capturing growth and change in the boys' language around the topics of war. This was done through categorization and specific word usage counts. Video journals provided more nuanced information about the boys' feelings and understandings of the individual experience of war for the soldiers. Videos were each transcribed for analysis.

Key Findings and Discussion

- Emotional connections between the boys and their soldiers deepened.
- Images of the soldier became more realistic, less stereotypical.
- Boys began to associate emotion with the experience of the soldier.
- Some stereotypes held by the boys shifted.

Conclusions

Making a connection with their Andean brothers was a valuable experience to counteract some of the impressions the boys were gaining through modern media. The success of the project in connecting my students to the real people who fought in the First World War confirms that it is a worthwhile part of my practice. Based on the research data, I will continue to conduct similar projects that expose my students to alumni stories that are held in the archives of St. Andrew's College.

Key Readings

- Lee, P. & Ashby, R. (2001). Empathy, perspective taking, and rational understanding. In O. L. Davis Jr., E. A. Yeager & S. J. Foster (Eds), *Historical empathy and perspective taking in the social studies* (pp. 21-50). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Reichert, M., & Hawley, R. Reaching boys: An international study of effective teaching practices. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 91(4), 35-40.
- VanSledright, B. A. (2001). From empathetic regard to self-understanding: Im/positionality, empathy, and historical contextualization. In O. L. Davis Jr., E. A. Yeager & S. J. Foster (Eds), *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies* (pp. 51-68). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

The Research Action

Introduction to Storytelling

Research From Primary Sources

Project Ideation Phase

Project Creation Phase

Storytelling Phase

Reflection



International Boys' Schools Coalition Action Research Program 2018 - 2019
Boys and Stories: Pathways to Learning



Scan this QR code to watch a video taster of my research project.