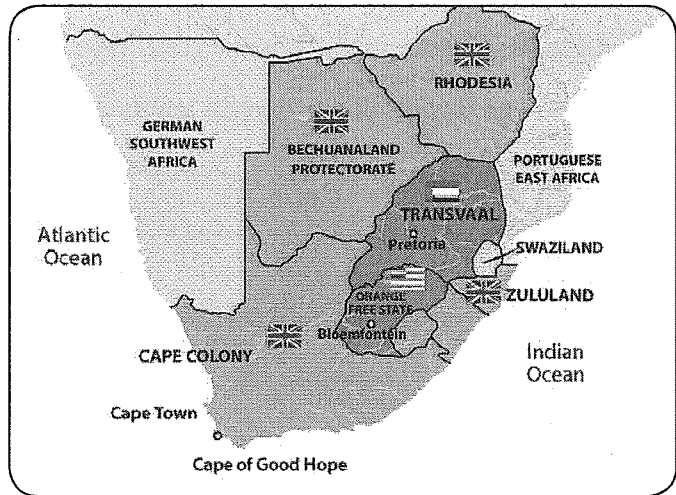


The Boer War



British Colonization of Africa

Canada's role in defending the British Empire was put to the test in 1899. Britain had been colonizing parts of Africa throughout the 19th century. The Cape Town region of South Africa was originally settled by the Dutch in the 17th century. By the early 1800s, Cape Town was under the control of Britain. The Dutch, also known as the Boers, were fiercely independent farmers and slave-owners who resented any British interference in their lives. When Britain abolished slavery in all of their colonies, many of the Boers moved out of the Cape Town area to Transvaal so that they could keep their slaves.



South African colonies at the start of the Boer War

It wasn't long before conflicts between the British and the Boers were ignited due to gold being found in Transvaal, where the Boers had settled. With the discovery of gold, many British and other foreigners swarmed into Boer territory. Soon the British wanted to annex the area into British territory. Of course, the Boers did not want this to happen.

Conflict Erupts into War

By 1899, the Boers had begun attacking some British cities in an attempt to drive the citizens from Boer territory. This was the beginning of what would be a nearly three-year war known as the Boer War. The British had the advantage of military size and strength, but the Boers were passionate, determined fighters. They ambushed British troops and raided British settlements. The British retaliated by putting Boer civilians in concentration camps, burning their farms, and cutting off their food supply.



The burning of a Boer farm



Boer commandos preparing for a raid

The British felt this war was the concern of the entire British Empire. The government was afraid that if they did not win the war, they would be in danger of losing all their colonies in South Africa. They needed to protect their ports along the southern African coast. These ports guarded important trade routes to Australia, New Zealand, and parts of Asia. The British government requested that the dominions send troops and supplies to help win the war.

The Boer War (continued)



Canada's Response to the War

The request from Britain to join the war effort caused a further division between Quebec and Ontario. To maintain Liberal control in the government, Prime Minister Laurier knew he had to come up with a workable compromise. He proposed that any Canadian troops sent to Africa would be volunteers, and no one would be ordered to go. The Canadian government would pay for this volunteer unit, but it would be under British command.

FAST FACT

Between 1899 and 1902, 7368 Canadian troops served in South Africa.



A member of the Canadian Mounted Rifles during the Boer War



Georgina Pope was the head Canadian nurse during the Boer War

Most people were okay with this compromise, but Laurier had strong opposition from **Henri Bourassa**. Bourassa was a politician and journalist from Quebec. He felt Laurier made too many compromises. He did not think Canada should send any troops to Africa, as doing so might establish a pattern for future involvement in other British wars.

Initially, 1000 volunteer troops were sent to Africa by the Canadian government. **Lord Strathcona**, a wealthy banker, strongly believed in supporting the war effort. He paid for his own regiment of volunteers. **Lord Strathcona's Horse Regiment** helped to win some important battles during the war.

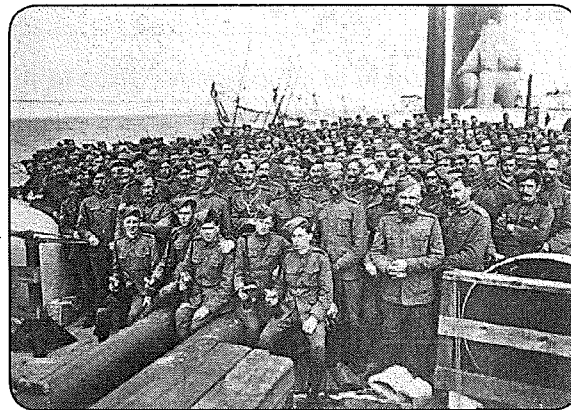
Canadian women also helped support the troops.

About a dozen women served as nurses in the **Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps**. This set a precedent for hundreds of other women to volunteer for World War I.

After a long, hard fight, the forces of the British Empire won the war in 1902. Canada's participation in the Boer War would make it difficult for them to not be involved in future British conflicts.



British troops marching into battle



The Stathcona Regiment sailing to South Africa



The Boer War

Choose a word/words from the word box to fill in the blanks and complete each sentence.

Not all of the words will be used.

<i>Lord Strathcona</i>	<i>Dutch</i>	<i>military</i>	<i>retaliated</i>	<i>three years</i>	<i>ships</i>
<i>volunteer</i>	<i>five years</i>	<i>civilian</i>	<i>ports</i>	<i>British</i>	<i>Henri Bourassa</i>

- The Cape Town region of South Africa was originally settled by the _____ in the 17th century.
- The Boer War in South Africa lasted nearly _____.
- Britain needed to protect their _____ along the south African coast.
- The main opposition to Laurier sending troops to South Africa came from _____, a politician and journalist from Quebec.
- The British had the _____ advantage of size and strength, but the Boers were passionate, determined fighters.
- _____ believed in supporting the war and paid for his own regiment to go to South Africa to fight.
- Initially, 1000 _____ troops were sent to Africa by the Canadian government.
- The British _____ against the Boers by putting civilians in concentration camps, burning their farms, and cutting off their food supply.

Name _____

The Boer War

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Who were the Boers?

2. Why did the Boers move out of Cape Town to Transvaal?

3. What happened when gold was found in Transvaal?

4. How did Canadian women participate in the Boer War?

5. What compromise did Laurier come up with so that he could send troops to South Africa and still maintain Liberal control of the government?

6. How did the Boer War get started?

7. What did the British government think might happen if they lost the war?
