



Vimy

Pierre Berton

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One chill Easter dawn in 1917, a blizzard blowing in their faces, the four divisions of the Canadian Corps in France went over the top of a muddy scarp known as Vimy Ridge. Within hours, they held in their grasp what had eluded both British and French armies in over two years of fighting: they had seized the best-defended German bastion on the Western Front.

How could an army of civilians from a nation with no military tradition secure the first enduring victory in thirty-two months of warfare with only 10,000 casualties, when the French had lost 150,000 men in their unsuccessful attempt? Pierre Berton's haunting and lucid narrative shows how, unfettered by military rules, civilians used daring and common sense to overcome obstacles that had eluded the professionals.

Drawing on unpublished personal accounts and interviews, Berton brings home what it was like for the young men, some no more than sixteen years old, who clawed their way up the sodden, shell-torn slopes in a struggle they innocently believed would make war obsolete. He tells of the soldiers who endured horrific conditions to secure this great victory, painting a vivid picture of trench warfare. In his account of this great battle, Pierre Berton brilliantly illuminated the moment of tragedy and greatness that marked Canada's emergence as a nation.

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