**The Battle of Ypres**

**April 1915**

On 22 April, two Canadian brigades were in the front lines, with a third in reserve near Ypres. At 5 p.m., the Germans released gas against the French 45th (Algerian) Division to the Canadians' left. An enormous green-yellow gas cloud, several kilometres long, drifted towards the French lines. When it rolled over their positions, French troops either suffocated or fled, their eyes and throats burning from the chlorine.

**The Details**

* Occurred April 22 - 24, 1915 in Belgium. This was the first action for the Canadians
* The First Canadian Division were battling the Germans near the town Ypres alongside British and French troops
* The Germans were the first to release the new weapon **chlorine gas**, which forced soldiers to evacuate the trenches.
* Ypres provided a defensive position from which to protect French ports on the English Channel. It had to be held.

**The Canadian Role**

* The French were the first to retreat, leaving a large gap between forces (several kilometers wide).
* The job of holding Ypres until British reinforcements came fell to the Canadians. They held the ground.
* By covering their mouths with urine soaked rags, they crystallized the gas, keeping them from breathing in the deadly vapours.

**Results of Ypres**

* In their first major appearance on a European battlefield, the Canadians **built their reputation** as a tough, dependable and worthy fighting force.
* There were heavy casualties for Canada. Of the 6,000 men who fought, 2,000 died. (1 in 3 men)
* Canadian, Dr. John McCrae wrote the famous and iconic poem “In Flanders Fields”