



NFB FILM

STUDY GUIDE

WOLFE AND MONTCALM

Produced by the National Film Board of Canada, 1957.

Black & White -- 30 minutes

Suggested Uses: Social Studies classes in Junior High School

SYNOPSIS

The people and events surrounding the battle of the Plains of Abraham are recreated in vivid dramatic form. Wolfe, aloof, uncommunicative, even with his senior officers, basing his whole career on the success of one bold stroke, is pitted against Montcalm who, unsupported and even hampered by the attitude of the Governor and the Intendant, is attempting valiantly to retain Quebec for France. By reliving those days we gain a new appreciation and understanding of one of the key events in Canadian history.

OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

The film opens in the quarters of Governor Vaudreuil where Montcalm is attempting to convince the Governor and the Intendant of the gravity of the situation. Losing his patience, he openly criticizes Bigot's dishonesty and so completely alienates Vaudreuil.

Aboard the flag ship *Suberland* we gain an insight into Wolfe's character and his great determination to proceed with his bold plan despite an illness which constantly drains his energy. We learn, moreover, of the impatience of his officers who desire fuller information on the proposed attack. Wolfe insists pointedly that their only concern should be to fight the enemy when the time comes.

Back at the Citadel, a sentry reports to Montcalm that he has seen British officers along the south shore studying the cove at Anse-au-Foulon -- information six days late because of an officer's bungling. Montcalm's disgust is increased by the realization that he is almost powerless to change the situation. Although he finds the manoeuvres of the British fleet confusing, he nevertheless orders a battalion to the heights about Anse-au-Foulon -- an order which Vaudreuil sees fit to countermand.

Meanwhile, Wolfe outlines the plan to Captain Bell, indicating the feint to be made against the Beauport shore. Because Bell is to deal with dispatches during Wolfe's absence, he is admitted in part to the scheme.

Montcalm realizes that the decisive hour is approaching. Wolfe's known determination, coupled with his own lack of supplies, leads to feelings of deep despair. In a letter to his wife which is never mailed, he reveals his premonition of the following day's disaster.

By four the next morning, the British have landed at Anse-au-Foulon: by six Vergor's post has been overrun and most of the invading force is assembled on the heights. Events move rapidly. A sentry brings the fateful news to Montcalm who orders out the regulars and most of the militia. Wolfe takes personal charge of his forces now and deploys them with skill and precision. The British troops form up in two lines under orders not to fire despite the accuracy of French sharpshooters.

Montcalm is again overruled by the Governor who keeps most of the French troops within the Citadel. Masking his dismay, the Marquis advances on horseback with those troops still at his disposal.

Wolfe is hit in the wrist; he wraps it with his handkerchief. Here and there a British soldier falls and the gap is quietly filled from the rear. The French advance continues. Wolfe is hit again. Yet still the British hold their fire. When the French are within 50 yards, Wolfe gives the order to fire. Nearly every man in the French front rank goes down. The British charge hurls the broken units of the French army back towards Quebec. Wolfe falls struck in the breast by a musket ball. Montcalm, mortally wounded, is assisted to the rear.

As a British officer shouts: 'They run! See how they run!', the dying Wolfe inquires weakly 'Who runs?' On learning that it is the enemy he issues his final orders.

Two days later Montcalm died. On Wednesday, September 19, 1759, Quebec formally surrendered and the British flag was raised above the Citadel.



SUGGESTED CLASS PREPARATION

a) Introduction:

The use of this film should arise quite naturally during a study of the Seven Years' War and its effects in North America. The expulsion of the Acadians and the fall of Louisbourg, all lead to an implementation of William Pitt's decision that the war in America should be ended quickly. Quebec has been under siege for eleven weeks and the opposing troops and their commanders nervously await the moment of attack.

It should be useful to precede the film with a map exercise illustrating the actual disposition of the French and British just prior to the attack.

b) Words Which May Cause Difficulty:

compassion
sustain

ingenious
battalion

countermand
reconnoiter

regulars
militia

c) Directive Questions Answered in the Film:

1. How long had Quebec been under siege? How many British attacks had failed?
2. Was the serious shortage of food causing the Governor and the Intendant to suffer?
3. Why was the Governor so sure that an attack could not succeed? Why did Montcalm think otherwise?
4. Why did Montcalm become furious with the Governor?
5. Why were Wolfe's officers annoyed? What particular information did they wish to have?
6. Why was the report about British officers reconnoitering Anse-au-Foulon from the south shore delayed? What precautions did Montcalm take on receiving this news? Why were these precautions ineffective?
7. What was Wolfe's plan of attack? Why did he reveal it to Captain Bell and not to his commanders?
8. What did Montcalm do when he learned that the British had scaled the heights in force? Did the Governor support his decisions?
9. What was Wolfe's battle strategy? Was it successful?
10. What was the fate of the two opposing generals?

SUGGESTED FOLLOW-UP

1. Take up and discuss the directive questions.
2. Discuss the main reasons for the fall of New France.
3. Discuss Wolfe's probable reasons for not confiding in his commanders.
4. For pupils who might wish to write character studies of the two generals, much material is available in the film.
5. Prepare a map of the region around Quebec City, label it and indicate the main lines of attack.

RELATED VISUAL AIDS

Filmstrips:	GENERAL JAMES WOLFE	(NFB - Color)
	THE STORY OF NEW FRANCE	(NFB - Color)