

War Memories across Canada Conversation Kit:

Where the Decisions were Made Laurier House National Historic Site Ottawa, Ontario



Bibliothèque et Archives Canada - Library and Archives Canada / E010752286

William Lyon Mackenzie King was Canada's longest-serving Prime Minister. He led Canada for a total of twenty-one years over three terms: 1921-26, 1926-30 and 1935-48. King conducted most of his parliamentary work from his library on the third floor of his home. Today, visitors can tour the library exactly as it was during King's lifetime, and discover clues about the man who led Canada through the aftermath of the First World War, the Great Depression, and the Second World War.

Discussion Questions:

What attributes do you think make for a good leader during a time of crisis? What external factors do you think influence the leaders decisions?

What were King's strengths and weaknesses as a war-time leader?

What were the major decisions he faced, and how successful was he in mastering these decisions?

What kinds of decisions rest a Prime Minister versus Canadian military command during war-time? Can you derive any links to Canada's Prime Minister today; in other words what types of mandates are vital to his role in today's society?

Activities:

Research King's War Cabinet. Who were they and what were their strengths? Stage a mock meeting of the War Cabinet. What are the most pressing issues? What factors need to be taken into consideration?

Hold a debate to present both sides in the Conscription Crisis of 1944. English Canada was generally pro-conscription, while the majority of French Canadians opposed the idea. What are the main issues presented by both sides?

Visit the Mackenzie King library at Laurier House National Historic Site in Ottawa, Ontario. Examine the room carefully for clues about the man who once made important political decisions there. What books sit on his shelves? How is the room arranged? What about the lighting, mood and the views from his windows? How does the room help us to understand William Lyon Mackenzie King?

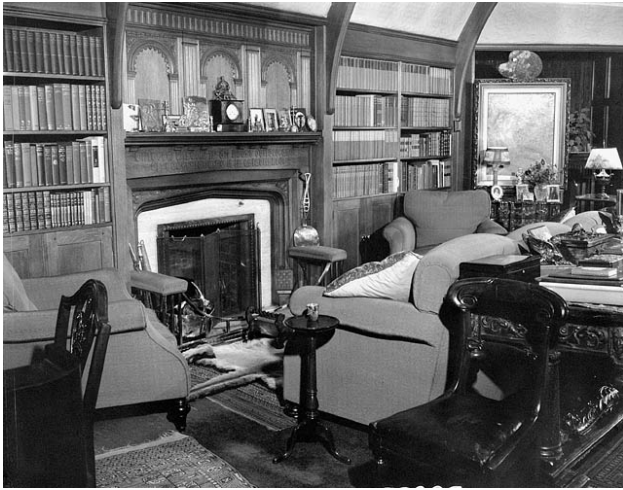
Resources:

Websites

Laurier House National Historic Site – Parks Canada

<http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/lhn-nhs/on/laurier/natcul/natcul11.aspx>

Available in [French](#).



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Politics and Government: Conscription (Canada and the War) – Canadian War Museum

http://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/news_papers/canadawar/conscription_e.shtml

Contains links to French and English articles representing both sides of the Conscription Crisis of 1944.

William Lyon Mackenzie King – Canadian Encyclopedia

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/william-lyon-mackenzie-king/>

A brief profile of King's life and career. Available in [French](#).

William Lyon Mackenzie King - Canada's 10th Prime Minister - Library and Archives Canada

<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/politics-government/prime-ministers/pmpportrait/Pages/item.aspx?PersonId=10>

Available in [French](#).

Videos

Mackenzie King and the Conscription Crisis, directed by Erna Buffie. National Film Board of Canada, 1991.

https://www.nfb.ca/film/mackenzie_king_crisis/

Books and articles

King: William Lyon Mackenzie King: A life guided by the hand of destiny, by Allan Levine. Douglas & McIntyre; Reprint edition, 2012.

King's war: Mackenzie King and the politics of war, 1939-1945, by Brian Nolan. Random House of Canada, 1988.

[Mobilising Canada: the National Resources Mobilization Act, the Department of National Defence, and compulsory military service in Canada, 1940-1945](#), by Byers D. Journal of the Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la Société historique du Canada. (Vol. 7, 1996).

[The Conservative Party and Conscription in the Second World War](#), by J. L. Granatstein, Historical Papers/Communications historiques (Vol. 2, 1967).

The incredible Canadian : a candid portrait of Mackenzie King, by Bruce Hutchison. Oxford University Press, 2011.

William Lyon Mackenzie King: dreams and shadows, by Iain Goodall. Dundurn, 2003.

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