

SUMMARY

Pierre Berton's 33rd book, *VIMY*, is the result of two years of research into the human side of the most famous of all Canadian battles. Berton and his research assistant, Barbara Sears, were able to interview 77 survivors of the battle, but Berton says that a treasure-trove of unpublished manuscripts, letters, and diaries formed the real core of the story. No fewer than 47 manuscripts came to light, of which 33 were still in private hands.

In an author's note to the book, Berton writes: "One thing that impressed me in the unpublished material is the eloquence of the writing. A good many Great War veterans obviously felt the need to record their experiences. Some did it to get it off their chests, others for the more important purpose of leaving a memoir for their sons and daughters."

The result is a stirring account of how the Canadians, on April 9, 1917, did what neither the French nor the British had been able to do — seize the most powerful enemy bastion on the Western Front.

As Berton says: "My purpose has been to tell not just what happened but also what it was like. I have tried to look at the Vimy experience from the point of view of the men in the mud as well as from that of the senior planners."

REVIEWS

"*VIMY* is a triumph. It succeeds on every level — as Canadian history; as military history; as social history and — above all — as the history of a journey shared by tens of thousands of men . . . the tale is told through the eyes of individuals whose deaths in this hell and whose survival of its horrors give what could have been — and has been till now — the only sense of hell that counts: we, too, are taken there and lose our innocence — forever. *VIMY* stops the human heart and breaks it over and over again."

Timothy Findley

"Another magnificent Berton book. A vivid, deeply researched work that chronicles the horrors as well as the glories of the Canadian troops and their World War I leaders . . . Once again he demonstrates his unique skill in entertaining while handling a subject that every Canadian should know about. This time it is Vimy."

Richard Rohmer

". . . this book delineates one sharp moment in Canadian history — the battle that was fought at Vimy on six endless days in April 1917 . . . By interviewing survivors and using previously unpublished diaries, Berton has scrupulously recreated the wholesale carnage of that killing ground. He explains how during that bloody process of achieving a victory previously denied the French and the British, we gained adulthood. It was a magnificent victory, and this is a magnificent book. *VIMY* is Berton at his best and that's the best there is."

Peter C. Newman