



Directions: After reading the background information and examining the source, answer the questions below.

Background Information: *During World War II, the Germans operated multiple prisoner-of-war camps, including Stalag XI-B. The following sources are firsthand accounts from two soldiers who were imprisoned there.*

Featured Source A:

Kriegsgefangenenpost [prisoner of war mail]

Recovered in Germany 16.3.45-17

Stalag XI B

Vor und Zuname [name and surname]:L/Cpl.
Sanderson Robt.

Gefangenenummer [prisoner number]: 200978

Dear Mother and Dad,

Just a note to let you know I'm well and a P.O.W. in Germany. Please don't worry about my condition or health—you know me, and I'm the same as ever. Your prayers have been with me, I know, and through my experiences I have been conscious of them and you. I was captured late in the afternoon of Feb. 19. It was rather a rough time, and I ended up on the wrong side of the line when the attack was over and things were more settled. I can receive all mail sent to me and the address is on the outside of this sheet. Hope war is over before I hear from you. Hope brothers and relatives are finding things o.k. Sorry if I caused you some extra worry with the "missing" report. It bothers me very much and I do hope you get this letter. I have sent a card previous to this by a few days. Wonder if you could let Marie know? Never once thought of this ever happening to me—but that's how I've ended up. Probably belated by the time this reaches you but congratulations on celebrating one more wedding anniversary. Often think of you all and am sending much love to you two particularly. All for now and will write again as soon as possible.

Your army son—Bob

Source: "Bob Sanderson to his parents, Nellie and Stanley Sanderson, In Ontario" in Gray, Charlotte, ed. *Canada: A Portrait in Letters, 1800-2000*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2003, pg 401-402.

Featured Source B:

They took my boots and gave me straw shoes to wear. They said, "our men will have more need for the boots than you will."

[My] wound never closed while I was in prison camp. It was just oozing and it was wrapped. The dressings were paper. It had lice. I would stay up at night trying to keep the lice out of the wound...It got so I could hobble on the leg.

...The Germans did not feed us enough really to subsist on. If you can imagine me weighing 125 pounds! I had weighed 168 pounds stripped... solid muscle, really solid...But I was down to 125 pounds, really skin and bones...

By the Geneva Convention we were supposed to receive one parcel per man per week... that's what the Red Cross was sending to the prison camp. The parcels had vitamins, crackers, canned meat, canned cheese, cigarettes and things like that in it... What we actually got was one parcel for 4 prisoners each month.

...There were so many people dying of typhus in the prison camp ... There would be 2 or 3 guys found dead in the latrine every morning. You'd go out in the morning and carry the dead out of the latrine. We didn't think we would make it through.

Source: Excerpt from an interview with Stanley Benjamin, an American soldier captured and held in Stalag XI-B Prisoner-Of-War camp during World War II.

Continued on Back



Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Short Answer Response: Both sources describe experiences at the Stalag XI-B prisoner-of-war camp, but they suggest very different experiences. As a historian, how might you explain why the authors might have portrayed the camp in these different ways? In your response, consider factors such as the author's purpose, audience, and the historical situation when the source was created. You may wish to consider the following questions:

- *Who was each soldier communicating with (their audience)?*
- *When did they share their experience (during, at the beginning of, in the middle of, or end of their captivity)?*
- *How might those factors influence what and how they wrote or said things?*