

Assembly: Local war memorial



Outline: This is a template for you to use and adapt to your own circumstances. It does not contain specific content but is a guide to what you could include in an assembly about your local war memorial, including background information and the personal histories of the people commemorated. You could use this with other resources from War Memorials Trust to form a series of assemblies for Remembrance week.

Suggested timing: approximately 30 minutes. Depending on the amount of information available in your locality you may wish to extend this or use more than one session to examine the different issues and stories.

Suitable for: Key Stages 3 and 4

Resources: information about your local war memorial and the people or events it commemorates (see our secondary help sheets, 'Researching a war memorial,' and 'Researching the names on a war memorial,' for advice on this). You may need to do some preparation in advance of leading an assembly on these issues.

Suggested teaching:

Key question 1: Where is our local war memorial?

- Explain that you have been finding out about the memorial near your school and where it is (when researching this remember that war memorials can be found in a variety of locations; some are in the centre of a community, others may be dedicated to a particular school or group and will be located in a relevant place). War Memorials Online (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk) may be helpful in identifying war memorials in your area.
- Explain what you have found out – for example what type of war memorial it is (see our help sheet, 'Types of war memorials,' for guidance on this), and when/why it was created. The location of many memorials was chosen carefully because of the significance of that place to the people it commemorates – this may be an interesting point to research and discuss.

Key question 2: Who or what does our local war memorial commemorate?

- Many pupils find the more personal histories of the war engaging, and learning about the people from their locality who fought can be an effective way of helping pupils understand the impact of the war at a local level and the resulting importance of the war memorial.
- Some war memorials list names of the fallen - research these to tell pupils about the lives of some of those who came from your locality and what happened to them during the war. You could mention several different cases or concentrate on telling pupils about one example in depth.
- This could be followed up in subsequent assemblies or lessons, possibly with pupils researching and presenting information they have found out themselves.

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- Details you may be able to find out include how many from the community were lost, what proportion of the population this number was, their ages, information about their families, and what happened to them during the war.
- Some memorials also list names of those who served and returned and civilians affected by war, which may make an interesting talking point.

Conclusion

- Having found out about the local war memorial and those commemorated on it, encourage pupils to reflect on what they have learned. You may think it appropriate to hold a moment's silence to give pupils an opportunity to think about the people they have found out about.

Notes:

- There are estimated to be 100,000 war memorials in the UK and most communities are likely to have at least one. However, there are a small number that do not. This may be because:
 - The community is one of a small number of 'thankful villages,' where all those who fought in the World Wars also came home. There are thought to be approximately 50 of these in the UK and some do still have a war memorial but these are often giving thanks for their safe return. However, they do make interesting cases to examine and you can still use some of the ideas here when discussing it.
 - Some very small communities such as villages and hamlets may have created a shared war memorial to commemorate the fallen from both areas – it may be worth investigating this.
 - A war memorial may have been relocated or be lost or unknown, and it may be worth investigating this possibility.
- Some communities, especially larger towns, will often have more than one memorial to different groups within that community. You may want to consider whether to focus on one of these.

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